Tower Collapse Was Sabotage, Watch Says

News for Far, Zarantyr 6th, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- Authorities suspect magic sabotage in the collapse on Wir of Providence Tower in the Copper Arch district.

As of Zor morning, the death toll in the catastrophe stands at 19, with another 42 injured. Most of the bodies still lie within the rubble, and Watch Commander Kurna Dalgoria said recovery efforts would take several days.

"Divinations have confirmed that no victims remain trapped in the rubble, and House Jorasco is taking care of the remaining injured. Today our focus has shifted to investigation and the recovery of remains." Dalgoria said.

Dalgoria said the investigation, a combined effort among the Sharn Watch, the King's Citadel, and House Deneith's Sentinel Marshals, has turned up evidence that the tower's noonday collapse was no accident.

"Wherever these saboteurs are hiding, the Watch will find them. No matter how far they run, we'll be right behind them," she said.

Sentinel Marshal Rorick Thyrish arrived on the scene with the first emergency aid healers. He said he detected dim, lingering magic auras at the base of the tower.

"The evocation aura I detected was probably the spell that damaged the tower foundation," Thryrish said. "And the conjuration aura would be consistent with a *teleport* spell the culprit used to escape the collapse."

Thyrish said a third aura was present: a necromantic residue fainter than the other two. He referred further questions about the investigation to Dalgoria's office.

Dalgoria refused to speculate on the motives of the saboteurs. The tower has several expensive residences, an arcane research group's library, a small but well-appointed inn, and the offices of Warforged Rights Now!, an advocacy group for warforged created during the Last War. Dalgoria said any of the tower's inhabitants could have been the saboteur's target.

About the Author

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Crown Names ir'Saldivar to Dark Lantern Post

News for Far, Zarantyr 6th, 998

By David Noonan

WROAT -- Former Sharn Watch commander Mathurin ir'Saldivar will be appointed by the crown to head the King's Dark Lanterns, the *Sharn Inquisitive* has learned.

King Boranel has scheduled a ceremony in Brokenblade Castle's West Gallery next Wir. After naming ir'Saldivar to lead the intelligence-gathering branch of the King's Citadel, the king will present ir'Saldivar with the ceremonial *lanthorn of fearsome truths.*

Members of the ir'Saldivar family and ministers in the Breland Parliament, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that Mathurin will accept the appointment. Crown representatives declined to comment on King Boranel's schedule or any upcoming appointments.

Brelish Parliament Lord Ruken ir'Clarn said he had "grave concerns" about ir'Saldivar leading the Dark Lanterns. Since the end of the Last War, the Parliament has sought an oversight role in crown appointments -- a role King Boranel resists.

"There's a lot about ir'Saldivar we just don't know. Rumors of a connection between ir'Saldivar and the Boromar syndicate in Sharn, for example," ir'Clarn said.

Some of ir'Saldivar's connections to the Boromar clan are more than rumors. As head of the Sharn Watch, ir'Saldivar put a record number of Boromar clan members behind bars. However, critics accused his office of relying too heavily on undercover agents that committed crimes to maintain their cover identities.

Ir'Clarn said that the issue of parliamentary oversight goes beyond this appointment.

"I don't think the crown sees the potential benefit that parliamentary approval would bring," he said. "Once appointees for high office get approval from Parliament, they will know that all of Breland stands behind them. It's more than the confidence of the king -- it's the confidence of the whole nation."

When named to the post, ir'Saldivar will replace Daal Chorek, who resigned the post in Aryth in the wake of the Tattered Flag scandal. Members of Parliament accused Chorek of harboring war criminals from the Last War, granting them new identities as manor lords in rural Breland. Chorek was acquitted in a subsequent crown trial.

About the Author

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Researchers Crack Code of Vvaraak

News for Far, Zarantyr 6th, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- A Morgrave University team led by Antiquities Professor Casimir ir'Tannan announced on Wir that they've decoded the Code of Vvaraak, a puzzle that has fascinated cryptographers, linguists, and historians for decades.

The Code, created more than five thousand years ago by a dragon named Vvaraak, is found on inscriptions in ruins across Khorvaire.

"The characters and symbols in the code correspond to no known ancient language," ir'Tannan said. "But we thought we recognized some patterns in the syntax -- the order in which the symbols were strung together."

The key to cracking the code, ir'Tannan said, was accumulating Khorvaire's largest collection of Vvaraak antiquities. Morgrave University used its own researchers, expeditions from the Wayfarer Foundation, and independent explorers to copy or acquire examples of Vvaraak's inscriptions.

"If you're going to decrypt something, it's important to get the largest sample you can," ir'Tannan said.

Vvaraak's inscriptions can be found on ruins across Khorvaire, ir'Tannan said. The Lost City of Harad-Nui off the Qbarran coast, the ruined Mines of Blazegold in the Mror Holds, and the Seals of Aal'drash in the Shadow Marches have extensive examples of the Code of Vvaraak.

One remaining puzzle: Why the Code of Vvaraak resisted divination magic.

"We employed all sorts of divinations, but even efforts to *commune* or *contact other plane* didn't get us anywhere," ir'Tannan said. "In the end, it came down to a lot of brute-force cryptography and the extraordinary ingenuity of my team."

The team's findings, along with a complete lexicon for the Code of Vvaraak, will be published over the next several months, ir'Tannan said.

"Just as we're standing on the shoulders of great historians who came before us, I hope that our discoveries inspire the next generation of students," ir'Tannan said.

But reaction from the academic community was mixed. Athuran Happlestep, history professor emeritus at the University of Korranberg, called the effort to decrypt the Code of Vvaraak "typical Morgave irresponsibility."

"We know so little of Vvaraak, but we do know this: It trapped or killed a lot of strange monsters from far-off dimensions," he said. "Now that anyone can read Vvaraak's inscriptions, what's to keep tomb robbers from opening a bunch of mystic seals and unleashing horrors that the world hasn't seen for thousands of years?"

Lyrandar Investigates Mysterious Lights

News for Far, Zarantyr 6th, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- House Lyrandar agents questioned several residents of the Mithral Tower district on Mol after mysterious lights approached airships departing from Lyrandar Tower.

A cluster of the translucent, glowing lights approached the *Virtue's Price* from Mithral Tower and floated around the hull before streaking back to the towers of Sharn.

Mol's encounter marks the third time this week that an airship crew has reported seeing the strange lights. Most eyewitnesses say the lights are spherical or ovoid, but some say they take a bipedal form when they cluster together.

"I didn't really see features, but it looked a bit like a glowing woman with arms outstretched," said Tinar Blugostra, a passenger that disembarked from the *Virtue's Price* just before it departed Sharn.

Blugostra said she watched the glowing lights flit across the deck and hull of the rising *Virtue's Price*. It floated near the observation dome on the lowest deck of the airship, she said -- "almost like it was peering through the windows at the passengers."

House Lyrandar spokesman Korvik d'Lyrandar emphasized that passengers and cargo were unharmed by the light display. Most found it amusing, he said.

"What we're seeing is probably a natural magical phenomenon or the activity of a few arcane pranksters," he said. "Airship travel remains the safest, most luxurious way to travel across Khorvaire. All that happened is that our passengers got a free light show as they departed Sharn."

The House is reviewing its security procedures and will augment the magical and mundane protections around its ships, d'Lyrandar said.

House Lyrandar representatives, accompanied by Sharn Watch inquisitives, questioned "about a dozen" residents of Mithral Tower about the lights, chief inquisitive Yari Talanak said. None were considered suspects and no arrests were made, he said.

Moira Harnatri, arcane studies professor of Morgrave University, noted that illusion magic could create the glowing lights but surmised that the mysterious lights weren't merely a manifestation of *dancing lights* or another common spell.

"If eyewitness accounts are to be believed, the lights were too bright, too big, and too fast to be a simple evocation," she said. "And the lights persisted after the airships were more than a thousand feet above the skyline -- beyond the range of a wizard on the ground."

Search for Missing Royal Aide Continues

News for Sul, Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- On Sar, family members of royal aide Shauranna Rokesko expressed hope that she might still be found, despite two days of fruitless searching throughout the breadth and height of Sharn.

"Shauranna must know that we're out there looking for her. If we have to search every room in every tower, we'll find her and bring her home," said her father, Kal Rokesko.

This morning, City Watch commanders reported that they were doubling the number of searchers across the city and assigning the case to inquisitives in every precinct. Commander Banath Hururik said anyone with information about the Rokesko case should contact the nearest City Watch official immediately.

Rokesko, an aide to Royal Minister Yarik Freul, disappeared from her room at the Sovereign Towers Inn on Far evening. Watch captains told the *Sharn Inquisitive* that the room showed fire damage and signs of a struggle, although Watch commanders refuse to discuss the investigative details of the case.

Freul, a crown liaison to the Sovereign Host, came to Sharn with his staff for an annual meeting with Onatar priests. He returned to Wroat on Sar to petition that the crown assign the case to the King's Citadel.

"I have every confidence in Sharn's City Watch," Freul said in a scribed statement on Sar. "But because I and my staff deal with sensitive matters of state, it seems prudent to involve those with expertise in such matters. Shauranna is no ordinary girl, and this is no ordinary disappearance."

The reward for Shauranna's safe return now stands at more than 1,000 gold coins. House Kundarak officials responsible for administration of the fund said that concerned citizens are still donating, so the reward is likely to grow.

About the Author

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Livestock Deaths Puzzle Ranchers, Researchers

News for Sul, Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

FAIRHAVEN -- Baffled ranchers in western Aundair expressed their frustration on Zol after finding dozens more dead sheep and cattle in remote grasslands.

Predation on livestock is nothing new to the ranchers, but these cattle and sheep have apparently been strangled or crushed, then bled dry. Each corpse bears a series of circular wounds the size of dinner plates.

Vaun Manakuli, a shepherd on the Eldeen border, reported that he had lost five sheep to the mysterious menace. "I'd heard the rumors, so I'd been staying awake at night to protect my flock," he said. "It was almost morning when I heard this low, groaning sound coming from over the hill. I ran as fast as I could, but by the time I reached the top of the hillock, I'd lost five sheep."

Whatever killed his sheep did so in seconds, Manakuli claimed, because he was less than 100 feet away when he heard the groaning sound.

Renowned hunter and naturalist Carsenni Rhun described the wounds as perplexing. He vowed to be the first to bring in the beast responsible -- dead or alive. "I've hunted across Khorvaire, from the Shadow Marches to the jungles of Q'Barra. No one's ever bagged anything like this, so I guess I'll be first," he said.

Rhun speculated that an octopuslike tentacle could have caused the wounds. "When I was diving in Eldeen Bay shortly after the war, sometimes I'd see a whale with a circular scar. Such marks are from the incredibly powerful suckers on the tentacles of certain sea-beasts," he said. "But the scars on the whales weren't much bigger than my hand," he continued. "What behemoth could leave a tentacle mark as big as these?"

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Report: "Critical Gaps" Exist in Graywall Defenses

News for Sul, Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

WROAT -- On Zor, retired General Tauma Hilliard issued a report criticizing Breland's postwar western defenses. The report stated that "critical gaps in the Graywall fortifications endanger the entire realm."

Hilliard's report, delivered to the crown at King Boranel's request, said that bandits, marauders, and monsters from Droaam continue to slip through the Graywall Mountain passes and menace western Breland, even though the Graywall region is one of the most heavily fortified locations in Khorvaire.

Hilliard's report cited four breaches of the realm's defenses in Zarantyr alone. Furthermore, when the snow that renders many Graywall routes impassible melts, incursions from Droaam are likely to increase.

"While the Graywall fortresses themselves remain secure, the Breland military cannot project force across the entire border," the report continued. "For every monster or bandit gang the army defeats, another one slips between the patrols."

Among the incursions last month were the following incidents.

- In a series of raids on the mountain villages of Skerritburg and Olinton, gnolls killed 39, wounded scores more, and caused extensive property damage.
- A medusa attack on Watchpost 15 left fourteen petrified.
- A band of trolls sacked the mining town of Harrack. The creatures used a previously undiscovered tunnel to enter the mines directly and elude Brelish patrols.
- A minotaur/orc horde clashed with elements of the Brelish 11th Battalion at Jasper Pass. Some minotaurs and orcs managed to escape east into Breland before Brelish reinforcements arrived.

Hilliard's report recommended a 20 percent increase in troop levels across the Graywall border. It further advised that troops stationed there would require extensive magical support and training in long-range reconnaissance.

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Gruesome Shipwrecks May Mark Pirate Escalation

News for Sul, Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

TROLANPORT -- The *Lucky Larkspur* washed ashore on the Zilargo coast last week. The bodies of its crew had been mutilated almost beyond recognition, and its cargo was missing. The *Lucky Larkspur* is the third ship to suffer such a fate in the last two months, and port officials speculate that a new band of pirates may be responsible.

"Pirates revel in the fear they cause, but this sort of ritualistic murder goes far beyond the pale. These pirates, whoever they may be, are by far the most bloodthirsty madmen I've ever come across," said Parlo Garrelspan, the Trolanport harbor administrator. Garrelspan asserted that most of the merchant ships plying the Sea of Storms are hiring extra marines to guard their vessels against the pirates. Thus far, the marauders have left no survivors, and no calling card other than the dismembered bodies of the crew.

"While this new band of pirates is bloodier than others, they represent only a new incident in a worrisome trend," said Garrelspan. "We've seen a real influx of pirates on the Sea of Storms recently. The conclusion of the Last War left too many war-trained sailors and not enough peacetime ships for them to crew. Unfortunately, a lot of them turned to piracy."

Thus far, all the stricken ships have been owned by smaller merchant companies, but House Lyrandar and the navies of both Breland and Zilargo are taking the matter quite seriously. A House Lyrandar captain, however, speculated that pirates might not be to blame. "The sahuagin dwelling in the Straits of Shargon have some appalling sacrificial rites," Captain Derenver d'Lyrandar said. "If a sahuagin tribe has migrated into a shipping lane, its members could easily produce this sort of damage."

"I know what the gnomes think," d'Lyrandar continued, "but pirates are too smart to just butcher everyone. They want their victims scared enough to surrender, not so certain of their impending doom that they're willing to fight to the death."

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Mysterious Riedran Monoliths under Construction

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- On Zol, Morgrave University anthropologist Guthra Maranech displayed astonishing drawings depicting thousand-foot-tall ovoid structures under construction deep in the Sarlonan wilderness.

Maranech told a packed lecture hall that while he was uncertain as to the monoliths' purpose, the "psionic" energy that provides the Inspired with their mental powers seemed to fluctuate wildly in the area around these structures. "When we discuss purpose, we enter the realm of conjecture," Maranech said. "But based on the energy readings, I would have to speculate that these monoliths are some sort of psionic batteries or amplifiers."

Throughout his two-hour lecture, Maranech noted that his depictions of the monoliths, which he observed during a covert visit to the Riedran Empire, are nearly a year old. The anthropologist was detained by Inspired security shortly after entering the Valley of the Monoliths.

Maranech ended his lecture with yet another astonishing revelation. "Some of the details I observed suggest that the monoliths may have quasibiological motility," he stated. "Consequently, they might not even be in the valley anymore."

Maranech's return to Sharn marks the conclusion of nearly four months of negotiations between Brelish and Inspired ambassadors. The anthropologist said the Inspired had treated him well during his detention and even granted him access to Riedran texts for study.

Thahad Vulreath, Second Prefect for the Adar government-in-exile, called for the Riedran Empire to make public the purpose of the stone objects and allow neutral observers to monitor events in the Valley of the Monoliths. "Given the Riedrans' oppressive policies toward the Kalashtar minority remaining in Sarlona and elsewhere, we cannot help but wonder what new horror these monoliths represent," he said.

Diplomats at the Riedran Embassy in Sharn were unavailable for comment at press time.

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Droaam Hordes Press Graywall Defenders

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

ARDEV -- A horde of minotaurs, ogres, gnolls and other monsters from Droaam clashed on Mol with Breland Army units guarding the Graywall passes. More than 2,000 Droaam warriors, with gnolls and ogres dominating the raiding parties, attacked at dusk in a series of incursions covering some two-thirds of the Graywall theater.

Early situation reports indicate that the hordes are directed by the Daughters of Sora Kell, who seized power in the region after Brelish forces withdrew in 987. The current assault represents the most significant push this year by that organization.

Junior officers retreating from advance posts in the Graywalls reported the capture of at least three mountain citadels: Mt. Anglio, Virtue Soars, and Blackwood Cleft. The disposition of those citadels and others in the Graywalls could not be confirmed with the Breland Army high command. These three fortifications were among the thirteen built in 990 after passage of the controversial Graywall Levy.

Retreating soldiers reported typical tactics on the part of the Droaam hordes, whose members gave no quarter and took few prisoners. Several retreating squads were turned to stone by medusas in the Daughters' pay, then smashed into rubble by the ogres and trolls in the advancing hordes.

Breland's 7th Army, still in winter quarters in Galethspyre, immediately began preparations for a forced march to bolster the Graywall defenders, Brelish Army officials said on Zol. Rumors that Borumel's War Council would redeploy the Argonth floating fortress to the Droaam border could not be confirmed at press time. Argonth last appeared in the Graywalls in 991 to stem a rising tide of gnoll incursions.

Critics of the crown's Droaam policy decried the Graywall defense plans even as they expressed support for the Brelish soldiers holding the remaining citadels against the monstrous assault. "When the king withdrew from western Breland eleven years ago, we all worried that a situation such as this one might be the consequence," said Baroness Avarulao, one of the Brelish citizens resettled in 987, now serving as Adjunct Minister for the Dispossessed of Western Breland. "What was once our beautiful homeland is now a breeding ground for endless waves of horrible monsters."

In a strongly worded speech before Parliament, Avarulao advocated the launching of a "cleansing crusade" to wipe out the Daughters of Sora Kell and reclaim western Breland. Provisions of the Unity Act of 988 prevent the Breland Ledger from reprinting her statement in detail.

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Prince Halix Enrolls at Rekkenmark Academy

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

REKKENMARK, KARRNATH -- Prince Halix ir'Wynarn, youngest of King Borumel's sons, enrolled on Wir at Karrnath's prestigious Rekkenmark Military Academy. Halix, who has resided in the Karrnath capital of Korth since 997, will take a historical course on the military campaigns of Karrn the Conqueror (-2049 to -1992). The reason for the prince's choice is clear -- Rekkenmark possesses one of only four surviving originals of Karrn's *Analects of War,* considered by most military commanders to be the seminal text on military strategy.

By virtue of his noble title, Halix also holds the rank of colonel in the Army of Breland. He is thus the highest-ranking Brelish officer to attend Rekkenmark since the start of the Last War.

The prince's course of study was announced on Sul by Syra ir'Tarrn, Karrnath's ambassador in Sharn. "We're delighted to have someone so capable at Rekkenmark," ir'Tarrn said. "But beyond that, Prince Halix's decision to study at the academy shows how far we've come since the Treaty of Thronehold. Just a few years ago, a Brelish prince studying war at a Karrnathi academy would have been unthinkable."

Breland military commanders, speaking on condition of anonymity, had mixed views on the prince's decision.

"Make no mistake, I'd lay down my life for the crown," said one high-ranking general. "But it's a shame that our prince can't learn Brelish tactics from Brelish veterans, rather than seeking some kind of Karrnathi pedigree. Those Rekkenmark blades killed a lot of fine Brelish soldiers."

Another army general, however, was more sanguine about the situation. "As long as he brings back some understanding of Karrnathi integrated polearm tactics, I'm in favor of his decision. That sort of knowledge might become quite useful someday, if you take my meaning," she said.

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POW Protests Rock Sharn Towers

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- An estimated 1,000 protesters marched through Sharn's Bazaar and Hareth's Folly districts on Mol, blocking key intersections and clashing with city guards throughout the late afternoon and evening. City Watch troopers were dispatched from the Daggerwatch Garrison at 6 p.m. to deal with the disturbances. By 10 p.m., nearby precincts surveyed by the Breland Ledger reported more than 150 arrests.

Blood of the Disappeared, a group founded by the parents and spouses of missing Brelish soldiers, organized the rally to protest what they called "foot-dragging" on the part of Breland's War Ministry and diplomatic corps. "We've been at peace for two years now, everyone says. But for us, there is no peace," said Blood Councilor Maruena Tokaunt in a speech to a crowd at Markenny Plaza. "Our government, from the crown on down, needs to take responsibility for negotiating an exchange of soldier remains and any living prisoners. Furthermore, the national armies must open their records so we can find out what happened to the thousands of missing and captured troops."

Most of the arrests were for disturbing order or property destruction, according to Watch Captain Zell Garrithall. Property damage was limited to street signs, some storefronts, and several tavern interiors.

Assistant War Minister Arneth ir'Challis said that while the crown welcomes "open discussion about the fate of those who gave their all for Breland," negotiating such agreements is a time-consuming, difficult process. Older missing-in-action cases tend to be delayed because of a simple lack of information, ir'Challis explained. "After nearly a century of war and upheaval, detailed records on every military engagement just don't exist anymore," he affirmed. "Sadly, we'll never know exactly where and under what circumstances each hero of Breland fell."

Adding to the frustration of investigators is the fact that more recent cases are sometimes cloaked by the demands of military secrecy. "When we inquire about missing and captured soldiers from the last year or two of the war, we get stonewalled," ir'Challis said. "Other nations don't want to divulge the details of recent battles because doing so means giving away intelligence."

Ir'Challis also emphasized that to the War Ministry's knowledge, Breland is holding no living prisoners from the Last War. He called on other governments to make the same pledge.

Tokaunt echoed that call. "The war is over -- doesn't everyone realize that? What possible reason could a nation have for continued imprisonment of enemy soldiers?"

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Korranberg Library Shares Genealogical Records with Karrnathi Cult

News for Sul, Eyre 15th, 998

By David Noonan

KORRANBERG -- On Wir, Library of Korranberg loremasters announced their intention to share genealogical tomes with the Blood of Vol, a controversial cult native to Karrnath. Twelve Blood of Vol priests will have open-stack privileges at the Korranberg Library, and a dozen Korranberg researchers will gain similar privileges at the Blood of Vol's Crimson Monastery, which is located in the Karrnathi city of Atur.

Loremaster Hurian Zarrek emphasized that despite the Blood of Vol's macabre beliefs, the information in the cult's genealogical records rivals the combined lore of Korranberg itself. "So many family histories were destroyed or lost in the Last War," Zarrek said. "Our records of the noble families living in northern Khorvaire are spotty, but the Blood of Vol has records going back for centuries. This historic opportunity was simply too good to pass up."

Blood of Vol worship is legal in Karrnath but forbidden elsewhere -- including in Zilargo -- because of cult members' tendencies to dabble in necromancy and other unsavory practices. Zarrek stated that for this reason, the priests from Karrnath would be strictly enjoined from conducting public religious ceremonies or advocating their cult while in Korranberg.

Zarrek further affirmed that this agreement marks a significant coup for the Library of Korranberg. "Never before has the Blood of Vol offered up any of its lore for the scrutiny of others," he said. "This arrangement could easily result in a doubling of our genealogical information."

The priests from Karrnath are due to arrive in approximately one month. The Korranberg researchers should depart next week.

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Mournland Incursion Devastates Eastern Village

News for Sul, Eyre 15th, 998

By David Noonan

VATHIROND -- A horde of ghouls attacked the village of Janwell and killed scores of villagers. Augmenting the marauders' strength were numerous magical conflagrations known as living spells.

The attack began at dusk and continued throughout the night. By morning, the village had fallen, and most of its people lay dead. At first light, however, the marauders slipped back into the Dead-Gray Mists on the border of the Mournland.

Among the slain were local lord Orina ir'Ghalaro and the staff of a chapel devoted to the Church of the Silver Flame. Most of the survivors were villagers who had taken shelter in a forest to the west at the first sign of trouble.

The marauders included a massive construct known as a cadaver collector. The name seems to be something of a misnomer, however, since the construct doesn't limit its harvest to corpses.

Rhennek ir'Tallon, the region's representative to Breland's Parliament, offered condolences to the families of the slain and promised that their deaths would be avenged. "I visited Janwell just last year for the apple harvest festival," ir'Tallon said, "and never have I seen a more pleasant hamlet. All our hearts go out to the families of those who lost their lives in this senseless attack."

But ir'Tallon did not stop with mere sympathy. He indicated that within the week he would bring a plan before Parliament to put more soldiers on Breland's border with the Mournland.

Periodic incursions from the Mournland are a fact of life in far eastern Breland, but survivors indicated that this attack was another matter entirely. "Once or twice a month, some nasty beast comes out of the mists -- a carcass crab or some other horrible creature," said guard captain Aorolo Roklins. "But this attack was far beyond the norm. The marauders were organized and completely ruthless. However, they didn't loot any valuables, and property damage was minor."

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Red Gauntlet Regiment Reunites in Sharn

News for Sul, Eyre 15th, 998

By David Noonan

SHARN -- The surviving members of the Red Gauntlet Regiment have gathered in Sharn this week to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Battle of Kennrun.

The regiment, composed of mercenaries who fought for Breland throughout the latter years of the Last War, was instrumental in Breland's victory at Kennrun. During that battle, elements of the Red Gauntlet Regiment prevented three heavy brigades from reinforcing the Cyran lines, enabling the Brelish 21st Cavalry to break through and liberate eastern Breland. The Red Gauntlet Regiment also served with distinction in the Graywall citadels during the late 980s, and during the "Great Thrust" battles of 992, when Breland pushed Cyran forces back to the original Breland/Cyre border.

Fewer than one hundred veterans of the regiment are alive today because its members were engaged with Cyran forces on the Day of Mourning. The regiment's standard is among those hanging at Athalus's Tomb in Wroat, dedicated to the Brelish victims of the Day of Mourning.

To commemorate the reunion, King Borumel issued a royal proclamation declaring the gauntleteers honorary members of the Army of Breland. This action is highly significant because the regiment's relationship with the regular army was often difficult.

House Deneith, a minority owner in the regiment's contracts throughout the Last War, also plans a ceremonial color guard ceremony in honor of the Red Gauntlet Regiment next Sul. On that day, Deneith soldiers across Breland will wear red gloves in honor of these brave veterans.

"The ceremonies and proclamations are appreciated," said Red Gauntlet Sergeant Darius Pike. "But the reunion is more about remembering the gauntleteers who never returned from Cyre in 994. I survived only because I was assigned recruiting duty in the winter of 993 -- an assignment I didn't particularly want.

"I used to know the thirty guys in my platoon better than their own families did," Pike said. "And my whole company was like family to me. Only three of those guys are still around. So we'll hoist a tankard for the other one hundred forty-odd brothers who are out there in the mist somewhere."

About the Author

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Councillor Advocates Gladiator Fight Legalization

News for Sul, Eyre 15th, 998

By David Noonan

DATELINE -- Sava Kharisa, Sharn City Council member for the Lower Central Ward, said the city should rescind laws forbidding gladiator matches within the city limits. "Today a shadowy network sponsoring pit-fights and other gladiator matches is forced to play hide-and-seek with the city guards," she said. "Certainly our guards have more useful things to do than arrest citizens seeking an evening's leisure. As long as the gladiator matches are safe and the participants are willing, we should give the people of Sharn what they clearly want," she insisted.

Gladiator matches are forbidden by a variety of anti-gambling, anti-dueling, and anti-bloodsport statutes. Therefore, participants must change the locations of their matches frequently to avoid the City Watch. Rescinding the statutes, however, would take the agreement of the full City Council, and such consent may not be forthcoming.

Savia Potellas, who represents the Firelight district where the famous Burning Ring matches usually take place, accused Kharisa of meddling in the affairs of other wards. "It's a known fact that the Daask gang runs the Burning Ring and a lot of other pit-fighting spectacles. Lower Menthis has enough problems without the crime that these monster-created bloodsports spawn," she said.

Kharisa countered that Sharn already supports several other rough sports and diversions, including hrazhak and skyblades events. Therefore, bringing the gladiators out into the open ought to reduce crime, not increase it. "Crime thrives in the darkness," she pointed out. "If we make gladiator matches legal, we shine the light on them. The only reason that organized crime has been so prevalent among the gladiators thus far is that we've forced them to operate outside the law."

Other council members, however, questioned Kharisa's motives. "Sava Kharisa wants to make bloodsports legal. Her attitude is hardly surprising, given that her cousin was arrested for attending the Burning Ring just last week," said Thurik Davandi, city council member for Upper Menthis. "I'm just glad he wasn't arrested for robbery, or we'd have to sit through a speech about why purse-snatching should be legal."

About the Author

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Stormhold District Quarantined

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Stormhold District Quarantined after "Redscale" Outbreak Wreaks Havoc

SHARN -- On Wir, the City Watch closed off access to the Stormhold District to keep the mysterious plague known as redscale from spreading to the rest of the city. Watch officers said they didn't know when they'd reopen the district, but that paladins and special agents with magical immunity to the disease were conducting limited surveys of the situation in Stormhold.

More than a thousand Stormhold residents are now confined behind the barriers that the City Watch has erected at all known access points to the district. Magical observation of Stormhold this morning revealed mostly deserted streets and evidence of sporadic looting.

The redscale plague causes victims to develop scaly growths on their faces and hands, and to engage in violent, unpredictable behavior. Before the closure, the City Watch attributed seventeen homicides and more than a hundred arrests to the disease.

Sages of House Jorasco are studying redscale victims in an effort to explain the virulence of the plague. "In the last two weeks, we've made some progress. Traditional anti-disease magic is effective at least some of the time, and we're researching some specific spells that should be completely effective," said Kustobel d'Jorasco. "But since we aren't yet sure how the plague is spread, we have to be very careful when studying the victims."

D'Jorasco further stated that the plague is definitely magical in origin, and that it resists common healing spells. Furthermore, she indicated that the sages had found some evidence that the disease places a magical compulsion on its victims. "One of the most puzzling aspects of redscale is how the victims behave," she said. "They seem to experience a lot of violent urges that cause them to attack others -- even their friends and families. Curiously, however, redscale victims never attack each other -- the victims of their violent acts are always uninfected people. Thus, if you're infected but haven't developed the scales yet, the other plague victims won't attack you."

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Bounty on Lightning Rail Raiders

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Orien Offers Bounty on Lightning Rail Raiders

VULYAR, KARNNATH -- House Orien has announced a bounty of 5,000 gold coins on a gang that has been sabotaging lightning rail service between the Karnnathi cities of Vulyar and Irontown. The gang, known by the "Three Fingers" moniker, has robbed the lightning rail three times in the last six months, eluding House Orien guards each time.

Three weeks ago, House Orien blamed the Three Fingers gang for the temporary suspension of rail traffic between Vulyar and Irontown. The shutdown lasted for three days, then additional delays extended it for two days beyond that.

Citing security concerns, the leaders of House Orien refused to discuss the exact reason for the shutdown. But a villager in Yellow Pass, a hamlet near the rail route, stated that a lightning rail carrying ingots from the Mror Holds derailed after dozens of conductor stones were removed from its path. "The officials grabbed every horse and every able-bodied worker in Yellow Pass to help with the cleanup," said the villager, who asked that his name not be used. "Several rail cars were tipped over, and some of them were still on fire, but no ingots remained as far as I could tell."

The villager refused to speculate on how the ingots might have been removed. "If it took dozens of horses and a second lightning rail to haul off the wreck," he said, "I don't know how the Three Fingers could have gotten items as heavy as ingots away from the wreckage."

The bounty should substantially improve the chances of bringing the perpetrators to justice. If would-be bounty hunters don't capture the gang, one of the national armies or dragonmarked houses still might. Karnnath has dispatched extra patrols, including the Company of the Skull, into the area to search for the raiders.

In addition, several dwarf clans within the Mror Holds are negotiating with Korth to provide pursuit parties. "That lightning rail line is our primary connection to the rest of Khorvaire, and we take threats against it as threats against the holds themselves," said Baron Juri Deepspring of Mror.

Meanwhile, House Deneith has offered the services of its Sentinel Marshals to protect the rail line. House Orien officials have assured the public that the lightning rails running the Vulyar-Irontown route now have "unparalleled security."

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Murders Tied to Pamphlets

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Sharn Watch Ties Murders to Key of Saranach Pamphlets

SHARN -- On Far, a city watch official revealed that the murder of Lady Kria ir'Tandrika, which occurred in her chambers on Zol, is related to the mysterious pamphlet known as the Key of Saranach. Ir'Tandrika's death is the seventh in the last two months that has been linked to the rare manuscript, which is said to be cursed with ill fortune.

Daggerwatch Garrison Commander Lian Halamar said he would be doubling the number of inquisitives working on the case by the end of the day. Thus far, the investigation has focused on several "citizens of interest," but no suspects have been identified as yet.

Halamar issued two writs of detention on Zol. Though the writs don't accuse the named individuals of crimes, they do give the City Watch the authority to detain those persons for questioning regarding the pamphlet.

The first writ names the author of the Key of Saranach -- a man called Valtreaux the Sage. The City Watch has no description of Valtreaux, nor are his recent whereabouts known.

The second writ names a woman known only as Providence, a frequent speaker in the Commons at Morgrave University. The writ states that Providence was handing out Key of Saranach pamphlets several weeks ago, though she hasn't been seen since. According to Halamar, at least some of the murder victims received the pamphlet from Providence.

A public appeal to turn in copies of the Key of Saranach pamphlet to the City Watch has thus far achieved no results. Ir'Tandrika's copy -- the first acquired so far -- has been turned over to the Blackened Book, the magical investigation unit of the City Watch. Halamar revealed that the pamphlet purports to be a self-guided study of esoteric mystical techniques.

"It's likely that the connection between the pamphlet and the murders is completely mundane -- the rumors of a curse are probably hyperbole," Halamar said. "We don't know how many of these Providence handed out, however, and we'd like to have them all accounted for."

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Eldeen Wolves Seize Expedition

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Eldeen Wolves Seize Expedition; Aundair Refuses Talks

WYR, AUNDAIR -- Dozens of archeologists, porters, and laborers from the University of Wynarn have been captured by the Eldeen Wolves, a guerrilla group operating in western Aundair and the eastern Eldeen Reaches.

A missive delivered to Aundair's Otharaunt Fortress demanded that Aundair pull out of the Wynarn River Valley in exchange for the safe return of the expedition. (Since the Eldeen Reaches attained independence, the western banks of the Wynarn River have traditionally been considered the region's border.) A palace official connected to Queen Aurala's diplomatic corps dismissed the missive as "a ranting screed from radicals whose time has passed" and said the crown will never negotiate with kidnappers and guerrillas.

Sentinel Marshals from House Deneith and agents of the Royal Eyes of Aundair are searching for the missing expedition. However, neither House Deneith nor the Aundair crown would provide details of the search, citing the safety of agents in the field as the reason for this secrecy.

The Eldeen Wolves have stepped up their kidnapping, sabotage, and murder operations along Aundair's western border during the past year. Led by a charismatic, mysterious figure known only as Rhunadask, the group operates from bases deep within the wilderness of the Eldeen Reaches and clashes frequently with the Aundairian army.

Despite the most recent kidnappings, residents of western Aundair remain resolute in their opposition to Rhunadask and the Eldeen Wolves. "Pulling out of the valley completely would result in the loss of many prosperous farms and vineyards," said Lord Hauron ir'Trellek, whose family manor sits on the eastern bank of the Wynarn. "But a fundamental principle is at stake here: That land is Aundair soil, and I've already given five sons to make sure that it stays Aundair soil."

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Court-Martial Convicts Tardalis

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Court-Martial Convicts Tardalis on Twenty-Four Counts

WROAT -- Colonel Reyva Tardalis drew a sentence of forty years in Dreadhold after a military jury returned convictions on twenty-four of the twenty-six charges levied against him by the crown. The jury found Tardalis guilty of dereliction of duty, inhumane treatment of subordinates, and conduct unbecoming an officer. The jury deadlocked on the two treason charges, either of which would have resulted in public execution of the prisoner.

Tardalis, brought in shackles before Magistrate ir'Aungré on Mol, was calm before the sentence was delivered. But when ir'Aungré instructed the bailiffs to prepare the prisoner for Dreadhold, Tardalis rushed the bench and had to be restrained, first by guards and then with enchantment magic.

Tardalis commanded a Breland regiment on the western front in the mid-980s. But when King Boranel pulled the army back east of the Graywalls, Tardalis refused to retreat. Instead, he constructed a fortress in the Harrkall Valley of what is now Droaam.

Tardalis offered the regiment's protection to settlers who likewise refused to retreat, and his soldiers managed to hold the Harrkall Valley against the hordes of Droaam for almost eight years. The presence of "Tardalis's Regiment" deep within Droaam was a source of pride for the noble families displaced by Breland's retreat, many of whom had been advocating a massive reconquest of the west.

When the Treaty of Thronehold negotiations began in 995, Brelish commandos stormed the Harrkall Valley and took Tardalis and his officer corps into custody. This action ended the ongoing embarrassment of a Brelish military unit that openly refused orders. Some diplomats, however, contend that the raid was also part of a diplomatic effort to bring the Daughters of Sora Kell to the negotiating table at Thronehold -- a conjecture repudiated by the crown.

Upon taking control of the fortress, the commandos found not the orderly encampment depicted in pro-reconquest leaflets, but a community held captive by Tardalis and his soldiers. Detailed reports of the conditions in the Harrkall Valley fortress remain under crown seal, but testimony offered during the court-martial trial alluded to slavery, sadistic punishments, and "unwholesome magical practices."

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Security Planned for Barrakas Summit

News for Sul, Nymm 15th, 998

By David Noonan

"Unparalleled" Security Planned for Barrakas Summit

THRONEHOLD -- Kaskell d'Deneith stated on Zol that House Deneith plans to establish a 5-mile "exclusion zone" around the island of Thronehold for the duration of the international summit scheduled there during the first week of Barrakas. As a result of these precautions, maritime traffic throughout Scions Sound will be delayed.

"For the duration of the summit, we plan to cover Thronehold by land, sea, and air," said d'Deneith. "We plan to counter every possible kind of security breach -- from magical surveillance to extraplanar intrusion -- so that Khorvaire's national leaders can focus on negotiations."

Known in diplomatic circles as the Barrakas Summit, this historic meeting is officially called the First Summit of Peace and Reconciliation. Its beginning will mark the first time that Khorvaire's national leaders have gathered in one place since the Treaty of Thronehold was signed two years ago.

But as of now, with less than two months until the summit is scheduled to begin, only King Kaius ir'Wynarn III of Karrnath and Queen Aurala ir'Wynarn of Aundair have committed to attending. Though Breland's King Boranel ir'Wynarn has expressed support for the Barrakas Summit, he has made his attendance contingent on the continued progress of technical negotiations prior to the meeting.

"Negotiations are ongoing with other Khorvaire nations and with the elves of Aundair," said Special Ambassador Hjeltia Petilom of Aundair. "The diplomatic corps of Aundair and Karrnath are handling the day-to-day organization of the summit.

"This meeting represents an unparalleled opportunity for Khorvaire's leaders to come together and chart a course for the future," Petilom continued. "We're confident that the generations to come will look back at the Barrakas Summit and say, 'This is when Khorvaire put its bloody past behind it once and for all.'"

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"Mad Mapmaker" on Exhibit at Morgrave

News for Sul, Nymm 15th, 998

By David Noonan

"Mad Mapmaker" on Exhibit at Morgrave

SHARN -- Was Valtreaux the Mad a lunatic prospector or visionary arcanist? Visitors to Morgrave University will have the chance to answer that question for themselves when his maps go on display next week in the Dezina Museum of Antiquities.

Valtreaux is the *nom de plume* of a dwarf wizard and prospector who traveled the length and breadth of Khorvaire in search of dragonshards some five hundred years ago. His maps are marvels of the mapmaker's art, but their painstaking detail is often obscured by coded references and magical obfuscations.

Several oddities are common to all of Valtreaux's maps. For example, north and south are always reversed, and tiny script around each map compass reads, "Every needle points south as well." In addition, many of his maps include seemingly unnecessary details, such as astronomical charts superimposed on maps of underground caverns.

But these maps are more than just oddities -- they have artistic value as well. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Valtreaux used rare pigments to color his maps, and those hues remain vibrant five centuries later.

Aurak Janirra, Cartography Professor Emeritus at the university, has offered several maps from his private collection for the showing next week. The professor freely admits to a long-standing interest in these maps and their maker.

According to Janirra, Valtreaux earned his "Mad" appellation long after he created his maps. "When Valtreaux retired from prospecting," the professor explained, "he arranged to have his journals published. Because readers found them difficult to comprehend, they began calling him Valtreaux the Mad."

Valtreaux's journals are full of cryptic historical references, allegorical tales, and numerical ciphers. Readers report that the most striking quality of his journals is the simplicity of their language -- in fact, many claim that Valtreaux's writing resembles poems and rhymes written for children.

"Compilations of *Journeys of Valtreaux the Mad* are still popular among rare book collectors," Janirra said. "The fact that some volumes have been lost to history makes the narrative even more difficult to follow.

"Calling Valtreaux mad is a bit cruel, really," continued Janirra. "Just because we don't fully understand his writings is no reason to assume that his mind was not in full working order. As I have often told my students, it might be more accurate to call us dullards for not understanding his wonderful writing and cartography."

Girallons Rage Through Stoneyard

News for Sul, Nymm 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Girallons Rage Through Stoneyard

SHARN -- On Far, several packs of girallons raged through the Stoneyard district of Lower Northedge, leaving thirteen dead or missing and scores of others wounded. City Watch officials reported that more than two dozen of the creatures had been captured or killed in an effort to restore peace to the neighborhood.

As of today, squads of soldiers are still conducting door-by-door searches of the entire district in an effort to round up the remaining girallons. "The origin of these creatures remains under investigation," said Watch Captain Handor Vassineck.

Eyewitnesses reported that the girallons descended from ledges and other high perches shortly after noon on Far. They attacked shoppers at a farmers' market on Green Coin Street, then spread out through the entire district.

"They snapped the neck of Thallia the grocer like a twig, then dragged her off," said Thomo Ghalann, a resident of the district. "They were loping through the city streets, bellowing as they went. Even my nightmares have never been as horrible as what I saw today."

Several Stoneyard residents cited the bravery of a druid known as Teln, who healed many of the wounded and used magic to drive off numerous girallons. At present, however, Teln is among the missing.

"Girallons are four-armed white gorillas known for their carnivorous diet, aggressive territoriality, and feral cunning," said Rhannock Plathekker, Professor of Cryptozoology at Morgrave University. "Even leaving aside the question of what jungle-dwellers were doing in the middle of a city, the girallons' behavior is puzzling," Plathekker said. "In the wild, their social structure doesn't extend beyond a pack of six or so. Furthermore, they generally consume their prey on the spot, rather than dragging it off."

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Anti-Dismantlement Bill Stalls in Parliament

News for Sul, Nymm 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Anti-Dismantlement Bill Stalls in Parliament

WROAT -- Supporters of a bill condemning warforged dismantlement acknowledged on Wir that they don't have the votes to pass the measure as a parliamentary decree. "I have the utmost respect for my fellow members," said Hannval ir'Tenko, a member of parliament from the Old Bandras region, "but I'm disappointed that they're turning a blind eye to a great injustice that is taking place within the borders of this nation."

Dismantlement -- the practice of taking apart criminal warforged -- is no longer practiced in Breland's major cities. However, this form of punishment is still meted out in more rural jurisdictions.

Supporters of ir'Tenko's decree say that imposing what amounts to a death penalty on a warforged who commits a crime is fundamentally unfair -- especially when the sentence for the same crime would be much lighter for a human criminal. Tales abound of warforged who have been dismantled in vigilante fashion because townsfolk suspected them of crimes.

Other members of Parliament hold differing opinions on this issue. "The dismantlement issue is a complex one that shouldn't be simplified into a right-or-wrong debate," said Tannis ir'Yamberra, a member of parliament from Three Rivers. "What we really need to look at is a more fundamental question -- to what degree do we want warforged mixing with the living races? That issue touches on every aspect of Brelish society, so we need to go slowly and respect the traditions that made this land great.

"The warforged did indeed make great contributions to Breland during the Last War," ir'Yamberra continued. "And no one would dispute their value as soldiers. But you don't use a plowshare to trim your beard. Not every tool can adapt to every purpose, and these creatures were clearly designed for war, not peace. Anyone who thinks that warforged fit seamlessly into the Brelish way of life has his head in the sand.

"The crown's Office of Warforged Affairs has been inundated with reports of warforged reverting to wartime behavior and attacking humans without provocation or warning," ir'Yamberra said.

According to ir'Tenko, the decree will be reintroduced in the autumn. At that time, the Breland Parliament is expected to include a number of new faces.

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Special Report

News for Sul, Lharvion 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Special Report: Black Airship Sighted over Eastern Breland

STARILASKUR -- Last Mol, dozens of people in the eastern Breland village of Atherton witnessed a midair battle between a House Lyrandar airship and a mysterious black-hulled airship. Reports from the various witnesses were in substantial agreement about the details.

Villagers reported that the Lyrandar airship chased the black-hulled ship, which then came about and rammed its pursuer. A series of lights flashed between the two ships for several minutes, then the black-hulled airship reversed away and headed east. The Lyrandar airship remained motionless for about 20 minutes before heading north.

Why the two airships were in that vicinity remains a mystery, since no scheduled airship service passes over Atherton. Ranking members of House Lyrandar in Sharn have refused comment on the altercation. They likewise refuse to discuss the disposition of House Lyrandar's airship fleet. But a *Sharn Inquisitive* correspondent in Stormhome, a Lyrandar enclave off the northern coast of Aundair, reported that the airship *Aasterinian Rise* arrived there on Far and has been under repair ever since. The four-day transit time would be consistent with its participation in the altercation over eastern Breland on Mol.

Reports of the black-hulled airship are sure to reignite speculation that House Lyrandar's dominance over airship travel may be less complete than it appears. Ever since the waning days of the Last War, sporadic reports of unusual airship behavior have fueled this speculation.

"It's patently obvious that House Lyrandar has many more airships in its fleet than it uses for its commercial ventures," said Denko ir'Fallon, a member of Parliament who has often been critical of House Lyrandar. "The unanswered question is why.

"The most likely explanation for this incident is that the black-hulled airship belongs to some rogue element within House Lyrandar," ir'Fallon said. "Its owner could just be a privateer who's spent too much time where the air is thin, if you know what I mean. However, this ship's appearance could represent a more serious schism among the Lyrandars," ir'Fallon continued. "At the end of the day, House Lyrandar is a family, and if it's like most families, its members spend a fair amount of time at each other's throats."

Ir'Fallon also noted that the black-hulled airship could be unconnected with House Lyrandar. "We take it as a given that only someone with the right dragonmark can pilot an airship, but I question that assumption. The gnomes of Zilargo who build the airships for Lyrandar may retain some ships of their own, as may some nations who developed them in secret near the end of the Last War," he said. "And given that Atherton is less than a dozen miles from the borders of the Mournland, you can't discount the possibility of some strangeness emerging from that area," he said.

Ir'Fallon stated that he plans to introduce a bill in Parliament to direct crown funds to the construction of airships that would fly under the Brelish flag.

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Lhazaar Volcano Erupts

News for Sul, Lharvion 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Lhazaar Volcano Erupts; Scores Feared Lost

REGALPORT -- Mount Cathanikau erupted on Mol, producing a fountain of glowing lava and an ash plume that could be seen from mainland Khorvaire. Tremors from the eruption caused high surf throughout the Lhazaar Principalities, and many low-lying settlements suffered minor structural damage.

A constant rain of embers and ejecta from the eruption has prevented ships from reaching Cathanikau Island, which lies some 500 miles northeast of Port Verge. The island has an indigenous population and is also home to an enclave of kalashtar refugees and a shrine to Onatar.

House Lyrandar and the Diresharks fleet anchored at Port Verge have assembled a joint relief convoy that remains at sea, awaiting the chance to move ashore and search for survivors. But glowing lava flows have already reached the sea on the northwest quarter of the island, and the eruption shows no sign of abating.

In Regalport, Hierophant Druid Tybalt Orenn said he was seeking magical assistance to end the eruption. "An eruption such as this one could last for weeks, but anyone still alive on Cathanikau Island won't survive that long," he said. "I'm communing with my fellow druids, seeking the power to calm the mountain. At the very least, we need to get the relief convoy onto Cathanikau Island and rescue any survivors."

This eruption marks the first significant volcanic activity in or near eastern Khorvaire since the 881 eruption of Jaurakhti Mountain in what is now the Mror Holds.

Cathanikau Island is frequently cited as a possible resting place for the famed Hoard of the Twin Drakes, a pirate treasure that was lost when both Drake brothers perished in 945. However, multiple expeditions in the 950s and 960s uncovered no evidence that the Drakes had ever been there.

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Crown Affirms Explorer Rights

News for Sul, Lharvion 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Crown Affirms Explorer Rights in Lost Caravan Case

WROAT -- In a brief statement handed down on Sul, the Breland Crown has decreed that anyone finding the lost Karpeshia Caravan is fully entitled to any dragonshards or other wealth found with it. This decree from King Boranel clears the way for rival prospectors, explorers, and teams from the dragonmarked Houses to search for the Karpeshia Caravan, which disappeared last year in the Shadow Marches. Because the crown was a silent partner in Antos Karpeshia's prospecting venture, some would-be recovery teams worried that any valuables they found would be declared "property of Breland."

Freelance teams, unconcerned with the legal status of the caravan's contents, have searched for the lost expedition, but none have reported success. "The parents, spouses, and children of the Karpeshias have long awaited word of the caravan's fate," the decree in the king's hand read. "A squabble over the expedition's dragonshards would be an insult to the memory of such brave prospectors. The Breland Crown hopes that the promise of profit may motivate searchers where altruism has not yet succeeded."

It was Antos Karpeshia, an accomplished wizard who had taken training at Arcanix in Aundair, who originally launched this massive expedition into the Shadow Marches. Communicating magically with his family in Sharn, he reported a staggering yield of dragonshards, including several rare and precious varieties.

But on Aryth 19th, a missive from Karpeshia indicated that his dragonshard-laden caravan had been beset by bandits, and that he planned to flee into the Haroon Denn Thal burial mounds in the northeastern Shadow Marches.

An Aryth 23rd communication from Karpeshia consisted of two words: winged horrors. The caravan was neither seen nor heard from thereafter.

About the Author

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Mykiro Harudden Collapses Onstage

News for Sul, Lharvion 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Mykiro Harudden Collapses Onstage, Then Returns for Encore

SHARN -- Fans of Mykiro Harudden were shocked when the famed singer collapsed on stage last night in the middle of her signature song, "Ravens at Twilight." Harudden had been performing at Kavarrah Concert Hall in the University District in front of a record crowd.

Bodyguards immediately whisked Harudden backstage. Nevertheless, six concertgoers suffered minor injuries when the turbulent crowd rushed the stage.

Approximately 20 minutes later, Harudden returned to complete her song. She also performed a new song, "Crescent Moon," to a diminished but enthusiastic crowd.

The concert marked a return to public life after a six-month absence for Harudden, the emancipated daughter of Duke Kenrou ir'Tallask and one of Sharn's best-known entertainers. Harudden specializes in the balladeer style that has been popular since the end of the Last War.

The public romance between Harudden and Janich d'Phiarlan captivated high society last summer, when the couple made joint musical appearances and performed elaborate dances at Upper Central balls. But d'Phiarlan announced last Vult that "our hearts cannot allow us to perform together anymore," and Harudden has remained in seclusion ever since. House Phiarlan members said that Janich d'Phiarlan is performing in Karrnath this summer and has had no recent contact with Harudden.

Upon returning to the stage, Harudden offered no explanation for either her collapse or her rapid recovery. Neither Harudden nor her manager, Kuirish Otokan, could be reached for comment before press time.

About the Author

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Breland Calls for Crackdown

News for Sul, Barrakas 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Breland Calls for Crackdown on Path of the Howl

WROAT -- Breland urged Aundair to crack down on criminals who use a secret network known as the Path of the Howl to escape into the Eldeen Reaches. "The Path of the Howl acts in contravention of justice and law, yet Aundair upholds justice and law as incorruptible virtues," the decree stated. "Breland therefore will offer what assistance it can in ending this stain on Aundair's otherwise laudable rule of law."

The palace decree was issued in response to the recent escapes of several high-profile Breland criminals, who remain at large despite the efforts of the King's Citadel to apprehend them. Jessen Theel, reputed member of a Sharn crime syndicate, escaped from the Citadel's prison on the Central Plateau four weeks ago and hasn't been seen since. A wizard known only as Fathom the Necromancer fled his tower on the southern coast last month before magistrates could question him about some mysterious disappearances in nearby villages. And Elenna ir'Vorshach, scheduled to testify under duress in the parliamentary "Thandrak Scandal," disappeared from custody last week while under house arrest in Galethspyre.

The decree mentions no specific fugitives who have used the Path of the Howl. However, it does state that the Citadel has "substantive and recent" evidence that the path remains active within Aundair's borders.

The Path of the Howl was established in the mid-800s as a safe and secret means of taking lycanthropes and other shapeshifters beyond the reach of a Church of the Silver Flame inquisition. Those fleeing the inquisition reportedly traveled via a network of safehouses and unobtrusive paths from central Galifar northwest to what is now the Eldeen Reaches. Most of the network runs through postwar Aundair.

The Church of the Silver Flame's campaign ended in the late 800s. But shortly thereafter, when the Last War began, the Path of the Howl became an escape route for political enemies of the five new sovereigns who succeeded Jarot, and eventually for deserters and war protesters.

A palace decree indicates the intent of the Brelish government, but it doesn't carry as much diplomatic weight as a crown decree personally drafted by the sovereign. However, palace insiders say that the Path of the Howl might be on the agenda for an upcoming Fairhaven Summit between King Boranel and Queen Aurala, and that the king may address the matter personally at that time.

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Horacht Sighted at Rekkenmark Graduation

News for Sul, Barrakas 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Horacht Sighted at Rekkenmark Graduation

KORTH -- Breyse Horacht, the Karrnathi general lauded for his daring and condemned for his brutality during the Last War, was sighted on Wir attending a Rekkenmark Academy graduation for naval helmsmen. Academy officials could not confirm Horacht's attendance at the ceremony, which was open to the public.

Horacht faces multiple war crimes charges in Thrane and has already been convicted in absentia by magistrates appointed by Oargev ir'Wynarn, last prince of Cyre. Horacht's whereabouts haven't been publicly known since his retirement from active duty in 995.

"He looked gaunt and walked with a limp, but you don't forget that goatee," said Sigor Lassinus, who briefly served under Horacht as an oarsman in the early 990s. Lassinus, one of the graduates honored that day, said Horacht departed shortly before the ceremony's conclusion and didn't speak with anyone while inside the Academy's Hall of Waves.

Horacht reached prominence in the late 950s after attaining the rank of general. He commanded a combined force of Karnnathi naval vessels and ground troops that raided Cyran, Aundairian, and Thrane coastal cities. In his most daring raid, Horacht took his troops from Cyre across the Brey River and marched them north to capture the Thrane city of Shadukar in a surprise attack.

In 961, Horacht ordered Shadukar put to the torch by Karrnathi troops when a Thrane army attempted to liberate it. The ensuing conflagration killed an estimated 7,000 Thrane civilians. Thrane reprisals during the subsequent "Red Sails for Revenge" campaign included a naval bombardment of Korth.

During the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Thronehold, Thrane demanded that Horacht be turned over for trial. The general went into seclusion shortly thereafter, and the final treaty included no extradition mechanisms for those accused of war crimes.

In the wake of Horacht's reappearance, Thrane is expected to renew calls for his arrest. In the past, Thrane's leaders have variously accused the Karnnathi military, the Security ministry, and the Karnnathi crown itself of harboring Horacht.

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Ir'Kalain Urges Q'Barran Emigration

News for Sul, Barrakas 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Ir'Kalain Urges Q'Barran Emigration for "True Children of Galifar"

SHARN -- In response to the Breland Parliament's recent Galifaran Heritage resolution, Q'Barran native Joseth ir'Kalain said on Far that his nation, not Breland, is home to those he called the true children of Galifar. "Where else but New Galifar is the flag still flying?" ir'Kalain asked. "Not in Breland, although the members of your Parliament seem intent on wrapping themselves in a flag that's no longer theirs."

The Galifaran Heritage resolution, sent to the crown on an advisory basis, is an effort to rewrite history, ir'Kalain asserted. "The very existence of the Parliament shows that Breland would rather make its own way in the world than return to the splendors of Galifar," he said. "In my nation, we still adhere to the Code of Galifar. There's no parliament, no warmongering, and no need to pass a bill telling people what their heritage is.

"Those who truly admire Galifaran ideals should pack up and head east," ir'Kalain continued. "While life can be hard in Q'Barra, those who emigrate there will be living among honorable neighbors who respect tradition and law.

"New Galifar always has a place for those with honorable hearts -- for those who put their loyalty to Galifar above their own petty desires," ir'Kalain maintained. "Emigration has a practical aspect as well, since recent dragonshard discoveries have poised the region for a prosperous future."

Member of Parliament Hagni ir'Octacles, a sponsor of the Galifaran Heritage resolution, insisted that ir'Kalain defines Galifaran heritage too narrowly. "Nowhere in the resolution do we claim to be the sole heirs of Galifar. To do so would be absurd," she stated. "But it's just as absurd for ir'Kalain to claim that you can't represent Galifar's heritage without falling into lockstep with every article of the Code of Galifar. Galifar was more than its Code, and I want Breland to be a place where we revere the ideals behind the code, not the code itself," she said.

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Wyverns Menace Northern Zilargo

News for Sul, Barrakas 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Wyverns Menace Northern Zilargo

OSKILOR -- Nightly wyvern attacks on towns and villages from Revan to Dragonroost have local lords clamoring for intervention from the Triumvirate. "Our militia is simply overmatched -- we've never seen assaults like this," said Gallina Intriak of Reven. "More and more of the creatures seem to come every night, and they're getting bolder."

The gnomes are taking the attacks seriously. "Although no one ventures outside after dark," said Intriak, "the wyverns are prying the roofs off buildings and digging into gnome burrows by force. The creatures attack sporadically throughout the night, then fly north before dawn."

Residents of other settlements in northern Zilargo report similar situations. Most Zil believe that the wyverns are roosting somewhere in the Howling Peaks. If the reports gathered from villages along the foothills are accurate, dozens if not hundreds of wyverns may now be calling the Howling Peaks home.

"Wyverns have long nested in the Howling Peaks, though not in great numbers," said Mackar Hrundiak, a hunter and guide familiar with the region. "You see one from time to time, but usually at a great distance. They're so aggressive that they don't usually share territory with one another. Once a wyvern attacked my horse, then flew back into the air to fight a second wyvern rather than finish what it had started."

However, Hrundiak did have one theory on why the wyverns might now be gathering in one area. "Maybe it's a mating situation," he said. "A whole lot of species throw out the rules when it comes to mating."

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Ambassador Protests Warhorse Sales

News for Sul, Barrakas 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Valenar Ambassador Protests Warhorse Sales

SHARN -- A recent auction of Valenar warsteeds amounts to "wholesale theft of our heritage as a warrior people," Valenar ambassador Daera Sorandal said on Mol. Speaking from the great hall of the Caerlyn's Blade stronghold in Middle Dura, Sorandal insisted that city leaders should enact laws to prevent future sales of the special warhorses that are held in high regard by the seminomadic elves of southeast Khorvaire.

"A nation that takes such pains to portray itself as a beacon of justice should know better," she said. "Allowing the sale of our warsteeds is tantamount to selling the very spirit of our people."

Sorandal went on to announce a price on the head of Syrrak Nayairt, the renegade Valenar elf who shipped the warhorses to Sharn by sea, then auctioned them off last month. She further stated that Valenar intended to reacquire the horses sold at auction as soon as the buyers could be tracked down. She said that financial reimbursements would be made where possible.

"We take great pride in our horses, and it's understandable that others would want them as breeding stock. But the ancient blood that flows through the veins of our warsteeds should not be lightly mingled with that of more mundane animals," Sorandal stated.

In answer to questions, Sorandal said that periodic auctions of Valenar riding horses were "distasteful," but represented an important source of income for some of the forty-five warclans that make up the Valaes Tairn. "The sale of warhorses, on the other hand, is anathema among all clans," she maintained.

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Fairhaven Plagued by Serial Arsonist

News for Sul, Rhaan 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Fairhaven Plagued by Serial Arsonist

FAIRHAVEN -- A fourth major conflagration this month has left residents of Fairhaven anxious. City guards are determined to find the arsonist responsible before more such incidents occur.

Krilauntha and Sons Tannery on Craver Street caught fire shortly after midnight on Mol. Witnesses reported hearing a rush of air and then a low rumble before fire engulfed the building. The flames rapidly spread to three warehouses nearby, turning the area into an inferno. But because of the late hour, the buildings were deserted when the fire started, so no one was hurt.

Fire crews battled the blaze until late morning. A guard captain investigating the scene said the tannery fire bears "significant similarities" to three previous fires in Fairhaven, including:

- A residential fire on Rhaan 3rd that scorched two city blocks in the Laurelbough District, killing fourteen people.
- A fire at an under-construction Sovereign Host hospice on Rhaan 6th that spread to a row of nearby inns, leaving four dead and seven badly burned.
- A blaze at Hooper's Ear Tavern on Rhaan 8th in which 38 people perished. City guard officials confirmed that the tavern doors had been locked or barred from the outside, preventing escape.

Tannery owner Vadnir Krilauntha has offered a reward of 3,000 gold coins for information leading to the perpetrator's arrest. This amount, says Krilauntha, represents "just about all the family has left."

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Sabotage Suspected at Bridge Collapses

News for Sul, Rhaan 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Sabotage Suspected in Recent Bridge Collapses

LAKESIDE, KARRNATH -- The recent collapse of Fairregard Bridge over the Iceflow River has disrupted House Orien caravans as well as normal traffic. This bridge is the third to be put out of commission this autumn.

Following a series of groundquakes variously described as "rumbling" or "thumping" by witnesses, the stone center supports of the bridge crumbled and were swept away by the river shortly after noon on Rhaan 10th. The bridge surface then collapsed into the Iceflow and was carried several miles downstream.

Benneth Trogholm, a teamster who narrowly avoided losing his train to the collapse, described his harrowing experience. "I was already pushing my team as fast as I could across the bridge. The ground was shaking, and I wanted no part of that," he said. "But when I was halfway across, I heard the bridge creak and groan as though it were alive! At that point, I just gave the horses their heads. Considering the speed of the collapse, I was really lucky to make it all the way across."

Helshea d'Orien, a caravan master who handles House Orien trade with the settler communities in the Iceflow River delta, said the collapse of Fairregard Bridge seemed suspicious. Two other bridges across the Iceflow have also collapsed in the past month, although no witnesses have emerged to describe the circumstances. "These are war-era bridges, but they didn't sustain a lot of battle damage," she said. "And the Iceflow isn't running high right now, so it's not like they're getting flooded out. Someone is deliberately taking out these bridges, one by one."

House Orien's leaders plan to hire guards for the two remaining bridges over the Iceflow River. "As it is," said d'Orien in explanation of this decision, "the loss of three bridges has added a week to travel time between the Lakeside and the delta settlers. And the remaining bridges are too small to support heavy caravan traffic."

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Anticipation Builds for New Roll of Honor

News for Sul, Rhaan 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Anticipation Builds for New Roll of Honor

WROAT -- Guildmasters, war heroes, and other prominent citizens of Breland are awaiting the autumn Roll of Honor with great interest. This document, issued by the crown every quarter, grants noble titles to those who have served Breland with distinction. Aides to King Boranel confirmed that the list of newly minted nobles is nearly complete and should be released by general proclamation within the next two weeks.

Boranel's spring and summer Rolls of Honor included many successful merchants and guildmasters. The elevation of such citizens to the nobility is believed to be a conscious effort on the crown's part to tie Breland's mercantile power to its political power.

Prior to this year, the seasonal Rolls of Honor included many army officers and war heroes. But while this season's list will undoubtedly have a military component, the officer corps is no longer likely to dominate it. "If you earned a noble title in the war, you probably have it by now," said Estellan ir'Napenthe, a heraldic scholar and expert on noble affairs.

According to ir'Napenthe, the number of names on the list will also bear close watching. Previous lists have given noble titles -- and accompanying land deeds -- to hundreds of people. But most of the estates made vacant by war have now been reallocated.

"Only about two dozen worthy estates remain -- mostly manors that wound up in crown hands after succession disputes, or simply because the war claimed all possible heirs," ir'Napenthe said. "If King Boranel wants to grant land beyond those estates, he'll have to tap into crown holdings. Thus, it's likely that many of the new lords created by the autumn Roll of Honor will receive noble titles but no land."

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Tower 312 is Missing

News for Sul, Rhaan 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Tower 312 is Missing

SHARN -- Architects, magicians, and City Watch officers were baffled on Far when Tower 312, a twisting spire in the Dava Gate district, disappeared completely overnight.

Tower 312 included four upscale residences, a private library, a cartography shop, and a private bathhouse. City records indicate that it had eleven permanent residents, although the Sharn Watch hasn't yet been able to confirm which of them were present at the time of the disappearance. However, Nirram Unslaguel, owner of Meridian Cartography, is definitely among the missing. He did not reside in Tower 312, but family members said he was working late in his shop when the tower disappeared.

Tower 312 was built on balconies and buttresses from Jenzherr Tower. But while Jenzherr Tower continues up into the Mithral Tower district, Tower 312 never supported anything skyward. The buttresses connecting Tower 312 to Jenzherr Tower are gone, and the walls of the latter structure are smooth, as if the buttresses had never been present at all. The support beams and walkways connecting Tower 312 to Calsin Tower have likewise disappeared, leaving no evidence of their existence.

The Blackened Book branch of the Sharn Watch is leading the investigation into this incident. Lady Warden Maira ir'Talan said preliminary investigations indicated the use of powerful abjuration and conjuration magic. "The authorities are treating the disappearance of the tower as a missing persons case, possibly involving misuse of magic," she said.

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Dragonshard Prices Skyrocket

News for Sul, Sypheros 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Dragonshard Prices Skyrocket

SHARN -- Prices for raw dragonshards have almost doubled in recent weeks, leaving shard brokers with scant supplies but hefty profits. Though dragonshards are not available in public markets, they are common in the exclusive, private auction houses in the Korranath district.

Jessen Urtannek, owner of Silverpick Prospecting, said that his company has recently had production difficulties in both the Shadow Marches and Q'Barra. Thus, bidders are competing for a smaller supply of dragonshards, and prices are rising.

"We're happy with the output from our Shadow Marches operations, but we've lost two returning caravans somewhere in Droaam," he said. "Banditry there is fierce, and even caravan masters who pay local warlords for protection are suffering losses. Even though getting cargo through Droaam is expensive, we can easily recoup these costs at the auction house. What's frustrating for me as a business owner, though, is paying out protection money and not getting the protection.

"For future shipments, Silverpick Prospecting will examine other shipping options, including sea or air transport through House Lyrandar," Urtannek continued. "Increasing the guard escort for the caravans is also a possibility, though a risky one."

In Q'Barra, the supply problem is simpler -- lizardfolk are attacking prospecting operations directly. "They wait for us to do the hard work, then they come out of the jungle, kill everyone working on the site, and abscond with whatever isn't nailed down," Urtannek said.

Dragonshard broker Pavlika Grihl said that supply disruptions are only exacerbating a surge in demand for the dragonshards, which have a variety of magical applications. "A number of arcanists and their representatives from the dragonmarked houses are always in the market for most dragonshard grades. But new buyers also seem to be coming out of the woodwork. They have money to spend, and they're indiscriminate about what dragonshards they're buying," she said.

Grihl speculated that the newcomers to the dragonshard auction houses are probably commodity speculators. "Outside of powerful magicians and the houses, no one can really use dragonshards," she said. "So I've got to believe that we're going to see all these dragonshards return to the market once the speculators get nervous and think the price bubble is going to burst."

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Rampaging Dragon Menaces Karrnathi Countryside

News for Sul, Sypheros 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Rampaging Dragon Menaces Karrnathi Countryside

KORTH -- The village of Haupberg Crossing was razed by an ivory-colored dragon as large as a covered wagon, survivors said on Far. "It came screaming from the sky at dawn to begin its destruction. Over and over again it bellowed, then breathed frost at anyone who came near and smashed whatever building was nearby," said Jool Hatresh, a tanner who fled on foot.

Karrnathi army units sealed off Haupberg Crossing after the dragon had departed. Survivors have not yet been allowed to cross the cordon and retrieve belongings from the wreckage of the town. Guards on cordon duty could not provide an estimate for when residents might be able to return to the village.

The dragon attack on Haupberg represents the third such incident this autumn involving small settlements near the western Karrn Bay coastline. On Rhaan 3rd, the town of Crystal Tide was attacked by a white dragon matching the description of the one that destroyed Haupberg Crossing. Sometime between Rhaan 16th and Rhaan 18th, the hamlet of Carver's Point was also destroyed by a large monster. None survived that attack, although subsequent magical investigation implicated a dragon.

"Indiscriminate raiding by dragons is unheard of in the region," said Karrnathi Army Colonel Thauk Rutellenach, who is responsible for coastal defense in the region. "We have our share of marauding monsters, but not dragons," he continued. "I remember working with a dragon briefly during the Last War, and I got the sense that most dragons were incredibly wise, patient beings."

Rutellenach said that patrols are being stepped up in the region, and that anyone sighting the dragon should contact the nearest army garrison. "To end this menace, we need to figure out where it's coming from," he said. "We're used to monsters coming out of the Karrnwood, but dragons have enough range that it could even be coming from somewhere in the open ocean to the north."

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House Lyrandar Mulls New Airship Routes

News for Sul, Sypheros 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

House Lyrandar Mulls New Airship Routes

STORMHOME -- Airship travelers may soon be able to reach such varied destinations as Starilaskur, Sigilstar, Adderport, Keth, and Stormreach on the Xen'drik coast if House Lyrandar leaders approve an ambitious program of docking tower construction. Yarrick d'Lyrandar, an influential scion of the house, has been negotiating with local leaders for airship towers in those areas, said sources familiar with the negotiations.

Refusing to discuss expansion of the airship routes, Lyrandar officials referred to Yarrick d'Lyrandar's negotiations as "internal house business." Yarrick d'Lyrandar has been traveling aboard the Lyrandar *River of Stars* airship, which is due to depart Sharn tomorrow.

Lyrandar airships currently connect most of Khorvaire's capital cities and metropolises. Other destinations are available only to those who can afford extraordinary chartering fees, and airship captains flying charters generally have to make do with whatever moorings they can improvise. Chartered airships to Stormreach often tie up at the lighthouse south of the city, for example.

One question that remains unanswered is whether the expansion would entail the commissioning of new Lyrandar airships, including some long-rumored behemoth airships that dwarf the existing 300-foot standard. Airship architects in Zilargo have been experimenting since the latter years of the Last War with elemental binding techniques that would provide sufficient lift to launch such vessels.

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Duke ir'Askranno Sentenced to Dreadhold

News for Sul, Sypheros 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Duke ir'Askranno Sentenced to Dreadhold After Rambling Confession

Duke ir'Askranno Sentenced to Dreadhold after Rambling Confession SHARN -- Before his sentence was handed down, convicted murderer Duke Rellen ir'Askranno blamed his killing spree last month on mind control by the Cult of the Twin Suns. Speaking before magistrate Carkell Anathamn, ir'Askranno wept, shouted, and tore up documents held by his barrister while delivering a 20-minute rambling speech.

"It was all the Twin Suns!" ir'Askranno cried. "I loved my family, and I would never have done anything to hurt them. But they got in my head, and they made me -- oh, gods, I can't believe it! The Twin Suns are everywhere -- probably in this courtroom. I know they're working among the Sixty Families, trying make us do -- well, terrible things! Terrible!" The duke's statement surprised court watchers, who had grown accustomed to ir'Askranno's stony silence during court proceedings.

Crown barrister Bhalla Quenthir dismissed ir'Askranno's claim as the ravings of a deranged mind. "Frankly, these ramblings aren't worth repeating," she said. "If some pernicious cult did have its fingers in every aspect of Sharn society, our investigation would have uncovered at least a hint of it."

Investigators from the Sharn Watch's Blackened Book unit used extensive divination magic on ir'Askranno after his arrest at the scene. Spellcasters found no evidence of enchantment magic, nor did their investigation indicate that any others had been present.

"And I would like to point out that we still don't know where the body of ir'Askranno's daughter is," Quenthir continued. "If he were truly contrite, he could at least tell us what happened to her."

After delivering his unusual statement, the duke was sentenced to life in the island prison of Dreadhold.

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Karrnathi Necro-Arsenals Remain Hidden

News for Sul, Aryth 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Karrnathi Necro-Arsenals Remain Hidden

WROAT -- Members of Breland's Parliament are clamoring for the public release of a War Council report contending that Karrnath maintains "necro-arsenals" beyond its postwar borders, and that at least one of these lies in northern Breland. According to sources within Parliament, a copy of this report has been circulating among the members for several days.

One person who has read the report told *Sharn Inquisitive* that a band of Breland army veterans uncovered a necro-arsenal last month in northern Breland while chasing down rumors of buried war gold. These veterans, whose names had been redacted from the report, evidently found a secret entrance to an underground fortress full of Karrnathi zombie soldiers and weapons. This hidden emplacement also included a functional smithy and several other chambers apparently used for unspecified necromantic purposes.

Most of the soldiers within the fortress were not animated, but the veterans did clash with the necro-arsenal's few active guardians. The band took heavy casualties in the fight, but a few survivors managed to flee. After tending to their wounds, they reported their discovery at the Breland Army's outpost at Sword Keep. Papers they took from the necro-arsenal's map room hint at the existence of similar hidden fortresses at other points along the path of the Karnnathi army's advances during the Last War -- most of which now lie within Aundair, Thrane, and the Mournland.

If necro-arsenals remain beyond Karrnath's borders, their existence would violate the Treaty of Thronehold. The strategic purpose of such emplacements remains unknown, although Karrnathi military doctrine has traditionally emphasized keeping large forces in tactical reserve.

Representatives of the Breland Crown and the Karrnathi diplomatic mission were unavailable to comment on the necro-arsenal report. Karrnath's ambassador to the Breland Crown was reputedly recalled to Korth last week for "routine consultations."

About the Author

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"Charger" Chaussinar Dies at 57

News for Sul, Aryth 8th, 998

By David Noonan

"Charger" Chaussinar Dies at 57

GHALT -- Eriell "Charger" Chaussinar, famed general of Aundair's 4th Cavalry Brigade, died at his manor west of Ghalt last week at the age of 57. A proclamation from Queen Aurala praising Chaussinar for his service to Aundair is expected tomorrow.

The general's eldest daughter, Karria ir'Brochem, said the general had been ill for weeks and had spent most of his last days sleeping peacefully, surrounded by friends, family, and comrades from the Last War. Shortly before midnight on Zol, however, Chaussinar reportedly roused briefly and asked, "Kervann, is that you?" Then he raved for a bit, whispered, "March on, Aundair," and passed away. Ir'Brochem explained that Kervann Andrihl had been Chaussinar's chief of staff until his disappearance and presumed death in the Battle of Mournsedge in 994.

The general's storied military career began in the unlikeliest of places -- the Poetics Department at the University of Wynarn, where Chaussinar was the youngest tenured professor in the school's history. By the time he had reached his mid-twenties, he had already earned fame in literary circles for his annual *Ode to Spring* collections, which were distributed each year on Eyre 21st.

But in 970 YK, in the aftermath of the Raven Incursion into central Aundair, his *Ode to Spring* consisted of a single poem called *The Horseshoe's Lure*. On the day of its publication, Chaussinar resigned his position at the university and enlisted in the Aundairian cavalry.

Chaussinar quickly rose through the officer corps, where he became known as the "Red Professor" because of his former career and reddish hair. But at the Battle of Jarrek's Hill in 978, he earned the nickname "The Charger," which his troops would use throughout the rest of his career. Encircled atop the hill, Col. Chaussinar's regiment executed a charge that spiraled down the slope, striking three different Thrane regiments in a matter of hours. This bold move allowed Chaussinar's regiment not only to escape the encirclement, but also to leave the Thrane units in disarray and unable to pursue.

Jarrek's Hill was only the beginning for Chaussinar. He participated with distinction in the Scion's Sound Landings of 982 and rode to the rescue of the Aundairian 18th in the Battle of the Fire Pillar in 984. The following year, he was promoted to general and placed in direct command of the 4th Cavalry Brigade. Eventually, he was given operational command of Aundair's southern front.

After the war, Chaussinar briefly took an interest in national politics, advocating an aggressive stance toward Thrane. But his time in Fairhaven ended with the famous altercation in which he stormed out of Fairhold after shouting at the queen's advisors, "Are we going to talk, or are we going to get Thaliost back?" Chaussinar then mounted his warhorse, Zandraur, and rode back to his manor, where he remained in seclusion until his death last week.

Next Sar at noon, the general's funeral procession will begin at the Chalice Center lightning rail station, then proceed past the University of Wynarn. As it passes, the University choir will perform *Lay of the Dragonhawk*, *March of Tensin*, and a new work entitled *The Charger Spurs Us Onward*. The procession is scheduled to arrive in the Sovereign Ward's Hall of the Assembled Host at 2 p.m. for Dol Arrah's Ceremony for the Departed. Then Chaussinar's body will lie in state for three days in Fairhold Palace's Vermillion Pavilion. Viewing hours there will extend from sunrise to sunset.

About the Author

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Early Snows Close Graywall Passes

News for Sul, Aryth 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Early Snows Close Graywall Passes

ARDEV -- An unseasonable snowstorm has dropped nearly 4 feet of snow on the Graywall passes, rendering land travel west from Breland impossible. Col. Kincaid Relaustra, speaking from Castle Arakhain, reported on the conditions. "Magical communications from snowbound citadels in the Graywalls indicate that all passes between western Breland and Droaam are impassible to wagon traffic," he said. "Some of the northern passes may be manageable on foot, although the avalanche risk would make such a journey perilous."

According to Relaustra, the volume of snow will likely keep the passes closed for at least two weeks. But if this unseasonably frigid weather persists, the passes could remain closed all winter.

Winter weather hasn't completely closed the Graywall passes since 988 YK. Many western Brelanders maintain that House Lyrandar was paid to augment the snowstorms this year by the Brelish Crown, which wanted a respite from attacks by marauders from Droaam. But both the Brelish Crown and House representatives dismiss such speculation as "typical wartime rumors."

Incursions from Droaam, while more sporadic than they were in the later years of the Last War, have been a thorn in the side of the Breland Army's Western Command recently. Now, just as in 988, the snowstorms are expected to prevent orc and ogre raiders from reaching western Breland.

Relaustra acknowledged the reduced danger from Droaam but noted that the snows present a security concern as well. "Many of the Brelish border citadels can't be reinforced until the snows recede," he pointed out. "A lot of the towers are already snowed in. The soldiers should have plenty of food and firewood, but they can't march out, and I can't march more troops in."

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"Lilygatherer" Corruption Trial Opens

News for Sul, Vult 8th, 998

By David Noonan

"Lilygatherer" Corruption Trial Opens

SHARN -- On Wir, five city council staffers, including the chief of staff to Councillor Borian Haldorak, went on trial for corruption, bribery, and narcotic trafficking. Central to the case is the charge that the staffers used their political influence to run a dreamlily smuggling and distribution network that stretched into some of Sharn's toniest neighborhoods.

"Over the coming weeks, we'll be presenting incontrovertible evidence that these officials used their positions to bribe members of the City Watch, forge customs manifests, and cover up their own involvement in a massive dreamlily ring," Crown Barrister Ulrich Thomossak promised. "And based on the testimony delivered, we may uncover other conspirators as well. If we do, I can guarantee additional arrests, trials, and convictions."

Three of the five staffers currently report to Borian Haldorak of Upper Dura. Since the investigation became public two weeks ago, Haldorak has steadfastly maintained that he had no knowledge of any illegal activities performed by his subordinates. "With two hundred years of practice under my belt, I accounted myself a good judge of character," Haldorak said. "That's why I grieve to learn of the charges against some of the colleagues I trusted to handle the affairs of this great city."

Haldorak refused to speculate on the guilt or innocence of his staffers. "I will continue to cooperate with the Thomossak investigation in any way I can throughout the trial," he said. "I would caution everyone involved, however, to let the wheel of justice turn as it may, and not to assign guilt or innocence until the trial's conclusion."

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Countess ir’Hilyark Flees Wedding

News for Sul, Vult 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Countess ir’Hilyark Flees Wedding; Whereabouts Unknown

FAIRHAVEN—The Hilyark family is searching for Countess Kehrlique ir’Hilyark, who disappeared from the family compound in Fairhaven on Zol, the eve of her wedding.

The bride’s father, Jarran ir’Hilyark, pleaded for information about his daughter’s whereabouts.

“I know everyone thinks this is a case of ‘cold feet,’ but my daughter has been looking forward to this day for years,” he said. “Tongues are wagging about this, but I ask you to remember that this girl has a mother worried sick about her. She has a six-year-old brother who wants to search every house in Fairhaven, tears in his eyes.”

“Please, if you know where my daughter is, tell us. We only want to know that she’s safe,” he said.

Because Kehrlique attended Morgrave University in Sharn and has many friends in the city, she may have traveled to Breland, Jarran ir’Hilyark said.

Vandrich d’Orien, ir’Hilyark’s fiancé, has promised House Orien’s assistance in making sure his bride is found safe.

House Orien agents are interviewing everyone involved with the wedding but keeping a low profile, guests said.

“It’s a bit awkward to have the groom’s family hunting for the bride,” one prominent wedding guest said on condition of anonymity. “On the one hand, of course they should help. On the other hand, maybe the bride doesn’t want to be found by the groom.”

The postponed wedding marks another blow to the fortunes of the Hilyark family. Last month, the Hilyarks lost a land dispute covering thousands of acres of prime vineyards between Passage and Bluevine. Kehrlique ir’Hilyark’s maternal uncle, Corso ir’Hilyark, was among the passengers on the Blue Malia, sunk this summer in Scions Sound. And a Hilyark-financed bridge over the Aundair river northeast of Fairhaven, intended as a gift to the crown, has had work halted several times due to cost overruns.

Also missing from the Hilyark compound are Nendra Bachain, a Hilyark family servant, and Macham Turrisaud, Kerlique ir’Hilyark’s bodyguard.

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Prince Slams Pace of Rebuilding

News for Sul, Vult 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Prince Oargev Slams Slow Pace of Cyran Rebuilding

NEW CYRE—The Brelish Parliament is dragging its heels on better roads and other improvements that would make life easier for thousands of Cyran refugees in eastern Breland, said Prince Oargev ir'Wynarn, last heir to the fallen nation.

"Each day, Cyre's children come home to New Cyre, and we greet them with muddy, nigh-impassible roads. Monsters from the Mournland continue to menace our settlements. But some do-nothings in Parliament won't loosen the purse-strings and give a generous welcome to those set adrift by war," he said.

The population of New Cyre and environs has swelled from a few dozen farmers to a teeming community of nearly five thousand since the end of the Last War. Most residents are former Cyrans who were beyond the nation's borders on the Day of Mourning.

The population influx has strained eastern Breland's resources, ir'Wynarn said. Specifically, the roads are in poor condition and border patrols are spread too thin to keep the refugees safe.

"These are brave people who lost everything in the Last War, and they just want a chance to raise their families and build a new future," he said. "But we literally can't get lumber wagons down the roads so they can build new homes for themselves and their children. Bandits are roaming the countryside preying on those who have little enough to begin with."

A levy of additional soldiers for the Eastern Command languishes in committee, ir'Wynarn said. Road improvements slated for this past summer were delayed by minister's order and won't be reconsidered until spring.

But Laruna ir'Panalric, who represents the Brey Crossing region in Parliament, said that New Cyre's growing pains are competing with other priorities for Parliament, including a general postwar rebuilding effort and continuing efforts to secure the Breland's western border. She accused Oargev ir'Wynarn of exploiting sympathy for the plight of the refugees for political gain.

"The Day of Mourning was a tragedy for all of Khorvaire, and I'm proud of how Breland has opened its arms to former citizens of Cyre. I wish other nations shared Breland's generous spirit," she said.

"But Breland is trying to make its way in a new world—a peaceful one with an empty Galifaran throne. Oargev can't expect us to reconstitute Cyre within our own borders. This is Breland, and it always will be," she said.

Laruna ir'Panalric is a sponsor of proposed legislation that would limit the number of Cyrans living in eastern

Breland. Told of her comments, Oargev ir'Wynarn said that Eastern Breland was being ill-served by some of its parliament members.

"Sadly, there are a few, in Parliament and elsewhere, who can't accept that the Last War is over and still want to do battle with Cyre. To them I say: Do your worst—we survived the Day of Mourning, and we'll survive your petty prejudice."

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Watch Promises Extra Patrols

News for Sul, Vult 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Watch Promises Extra Patrols for Long Shadows

SHARN -- The city will be well protected against criminals during the upcoming nights of the Long Shadows (Vult 26th through 28th), according to Lord Commander Iyan ir'Talan. "The Sharn Watch remains vigilant throughout the year, and Long Shadows is no exception," asserted ir'Talan on Sar. "City residents can take comfort in knowing that they're safe in their homes with the Watch on guard."

Commander ir'Talan said patrols would be increased by one-quarter during Long Shadows nights. Furthermore, the Daggerwatch Garrison plans to augment patrols in the Dura quarter by one-half.

"I'd like to commend my watch commanders for the success of last year's Shadows at Bay operation, during which the Watch arrested more than a thousand criminals during Long Shadows," ir'Talan said. "And I can promise an even safer city this year."

But Councillor Sava Kharisa maintains that the high number of arrests during Long Shadows last year is evidence of failure, not success. "In the Lower Central district, armed gangs ran wild and took over the streets at night," she said. "Where was the Watch? Locked behind the doors of the garrisons. For every arrest the Watch officers made, two other criminals ran through the streets of Sharn unimpeded."

Kharisa also pointed out that some of the high-profile crimes from last year's Long Shadows -- including the ritual murders at Bluebrick Spire -- still remain unsolved a year later.

Commander ir'Talan said that while agents of the Blackened Book would doubtless be active throughout Long Shadows, few arrests have historically been made for crimes involving the supernatural. "Long Shadows carries with it a lot of superstition, and events such as the Bluebrick Spire case feed on that kind of hysteria," he said. "But garden-variety criminals are using Long Shadows as an excuse for their own nefarious activities -- it's not a case of monsters running amok."

The *Sharn Inquisitive* plans a special report on Long Shadows unrest in a later issue.

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Arranash Execution Set for Midnight

News for Sul, Zarantyr 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Arranash Execution Set for Midnight

SHARN -- Sesko Arranash, who was convicted of treason last month for attempting to sell information about Argonth's magical defenses, will be executed by hanging tonight at midnight. "Arranash will pay the ultimate price for his traitorous scheme," said Knight-Marshal Banarak Tithon. "And the nation of Breland will sleep better tonight knowing that no one can escape its justice."

Scaffolding for the Arranash execution is being erected today in front of Andith Tower in the Ambassador Towers district. The public is invited to witness the execution. Knights of the King's Citadel said that because Arranash is a powerful spellcaster, he will be bound, gagged, and blindfolded prior to the hanging.

Arranash's hanging marks the first execution in Sharn for a crime committed after the end of the Last War. According to testimony presented before a special crown magistrate, Arranash used divination magic to breach magical security around Argonth, Breland's floating city-fortress. He then attempted to contact numerous foreign governments to set up an auction in which he could sell the information he had gained to the highest bidder.

Arranash allegedly knew how to enter Argonth undetected and how to force it to the ground, according to court testimony. But agents of the King's Citadel intercepted plans for the auction and apprehended Arranash in his tower northeast of Sharn.

"As midnight passes," said Tithon, "all Breland should remember the names of Arrak Slocurr, Kendrick d'Deneith, and a warforged known as Pym, all of whom died during the battle at Arranash's tower. Those three brave souls perished bringing Arranash to justice, and his death tonight will validate their sacrifice."

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"Reconstruction Decree" Licenses

News for Sul, Zarantyr 1st, 998

By David Noonan

"Reconstruction Decree" Business Licenses Available Today

WROAT -- The start of a new year means a fresh set of licensing fees for new businesses in Breland. The Crown hopes that the new fee structure will restore Breland's economy to its prewar strength.

Starting today, the license fees for new businesses in eastern Breland within 40 miles of the border are 25% to 75% lower than last year, depending on the type of business. Similar "reconstruction licenses" are available to businesses in a number of communities near Cragwar and Sword Keep, as well as along the Brey River. Minister of the Exchequer Hithor ir'Naamaran said the lower license fees would help the beleaguered communities in the northern and western portions of Breland. "Too many of our citizens have to travel to central Breland to sell their wares, buy needed supplies, and engage in the sort of commerce that so many of us take for granted," he said. "By making it easier to start a business in the outlying areas, the Crown is lending a helping hand to those who sacrificed so much while their communities were on the front lines of the Last War."

The royal decree that establishes these "reconstruction licenses" also slashes licensing fees for specific business types -- most notably overland and maritime shipping concerns. But not all of these changes have come easily. An across-the-board 25% cut in shipping business licenses was controversial enough to delay pronouncement of the final decree until three weeks ago because Houses Orien and Lyrandar lobbied the Crown to maintain shipping license fees at their current levels. As extranational entities, the dragonmarked houses don't purchase business licenses for themselves, but when they invest in smaller ventures, they purchase business licenses as a matter of course.

A longtime merchant welcomed the lower license fees but said the Crown might be overly optimistic about its ability to stimulate the shipping sector. "The hardest part about moving goods isn't the Breland business license -- it's the competition," said Jarrah Duvax, co-owner of Blackhorse Caravans. "With a little luck, we've been able to eke out a living. But I sure wouldn't recommend this line of work to anyone else. If you're trying to decide what kind of business to invest in, here's a tip: Don't attempt to compete with a dragonmarked house."

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Shipwreck Survivors Launched Distress Call

News for Sul, Zarantyr 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Bitter Sea Shipwreck Survivors Launched Distress Call

REKKENMARK -- Thrane's ambassador to Karrnath has informed the Crown that a magic distress signal has been received from the *Perfect Chicane* -- now three weeks overdue from a whaling expedition in the Bitter Sea. According to Ambassador Tellek ir'Uther, a Silver Flame templar stationed in southern Thrane received a *sending* spell from his estranged brother, who had left home last year to seek his fortune at sea.

The message allegedly went as follows: "Brother, aid me. We struck iceberg northwest of Gurrney's Point. Ship and most crew are lost. We cling to iceberg. So huge... so cold. Help..."

This report lifts the hopes of the sailors' families and focuses the rescue efforts of the Karrnath Navy and House Lyrandar, which volunteered several wind galleons for the search.

Admiral Vurth Harranacht said the message from the *Perfect Chicane*'s crew was good fortune indeed. "Even as I speak," he said, "ships are sailing from Gurrney's Point, and we're making every effort to get spellcasters aboard those ships to aid in the search. The fact that the whole sea is fogged in right now makes the search a lot more difficult -- not to mention dangerous for the searchers.

But Harranacht cautioned against unrealistic expectations as well. "Two things still worry me," he said. "The first is the weather. It's foggy and cold out there, and we don't have any idea what kind of condition the survivors were in when they sent the message.

"The second issue is the timing," he continued. "That distress call is almost 48 hours old, and it'll take time to move our ships closer to Gurrney's Point. A major eastward current runs out there too, and an iceberg caught in it could be leagues away by now."

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Flamewind Issues Annual Riddle

News for Sul, Zarantyr 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Flamewind Issues Annual Riddle of the Three Stars

SHARN -- For the third year in a row, the Morgrave University gynosphinx known as Flamewind plans to tell her "riddle of the three stars" to anyone with 50 gold coins. The gynosphinx will begin granting private audiences at noon tomorrow to deliver the riddle. As this issue of *Sharn Inquisitive* went to press, dozens of people were already in line in front of Lareth Hall, awaiting their turn to hear the puzzle.

Flamewind's riddles are generally multipart puzzles that take treasure-seekers throughout Sharn in search of a chest full of coins and gems that she's hidden somewhere in the city. Two years ago, her riddle sent the city into an uproar for three weeks while Sharn residents pored over the clues and scoured every nook and cranny of the city for the treasure. The inaugural winner, a mendicant monk named Guptra One-Eye, parleyed her fortune into a glittering spire in Mithral Tower and marriage into the ir'Callandu family.

Last year, a group of Morgrave University students solved Flamewind's riddle in only six days, amid persistent rumors that they had used magical divinations to bypass many of the riddle's challenges. But good luck didn't follow their sudden fortune -- in fact, three of the winners died within the last year. One of the two surviving winners, Talia Churchend, is presently incarcerated in the Citadel for her part in an unsuccessful murder-for-hire scheme against the other survivor, singer Nulio Anachram.

In brief remarks to *Sharn Inquisitive*, Flamewind refused to discuss the tactics of past winners directly but expressed confidence in the "active countermeasures" she's deployed against those who try to skip steps in the trail of riddles. Flamewind further stated that she didn't object to contestants sharing the initial riddle with others, but only those who have paid the entrance fee and heard the initial riddle are eligible for the riches to which it leads.

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Karrnath Decries New Elf Fortress in Talenta

News for Sul, Olarune 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Karrnath Decries New Elf Fortress in Talenta Plains

VULYAR -- Countess Xeria ir'Borutau called on the elves of Valenar to cease construction of a fortress southeast of Vulyar immediately, calling the structure "a provocation that mighty Karrnath cannot ignore." Speaking during a general court audience on Zor, the countess said she was planning to petition Korth for an immediate military response to the fortress.

"No elf community exists within a two-day ride of the fort they're building, so they can't trot out the tired old self-defense claim they're so fond of," she pointed out. "This fort, if completed, will be a dagger pointed directly at the heart of eastern Karrnath."

Vulyar's city militia is moving to a war footing at ir'Boratau's direction. The countess further stated that she's considering a supplemental levy to fund a mercenary cadre. "We can muster quite a bit of support locally right away, and I expect all of Karrnath to be behind us once word gets out," she said. "The Valenars have made a grave error, and the sooner they realize it, the better."

Warchief Shulach Miritarn in Taer Valaestas said that ir'Borutau was engaged in what he called provincial saber-rattling. "The Valaes Tairn have no designs on Karrnath," he said. "But we will defend our heritage to the death. And I hope this Karrnathi countess never has to learn the lesson inherent in those words."

Miritarn further stated that the fortress in question isn't being built so much as restored from its ruined state. "These forts -- we call them taers -- were guarding these lands long before humans ever conceived of Khorvaire, let alone Karrnath. The Karrnathis are the interlopers, not the Valeas Tairn," he asserted.

"The humans and halflings of eastern Karrnath and the Talenta Plains can go about their peaceful business with no interference from the elves," continued Miritarn. "But if the Karrnathis threaten the reconstruction of this taer, we'll paint the plains red with their blood."

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Silver Flame Protests at Morgrave University

News for Sul, Olarune 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Silver Flame Protests at Morgrave University Enter Fourth Day

SHARN -- The ongoing religious protest against Provost Dannad Mourain entered its fourth day on Far. Angry worshipers of the Silver Flame called on Morgrave University to fire the controversial historian.

Several hundred protesters crammed into the Commons atop Breland Spire, alternating between hymns to the Silver Flame and a series of oratories that castigated Mourain for his views on the origin of the Church of the Silver Flame. The crowds are growing larger each day, displacing more and more of the students who use the open-air court to eat and study.

Mourain has drawn the ire of the Church of the Silver Flame for his authorship of an academic paper contending that the church is a theological descendant of a Xen'drik serpent cult. Mourain said that an exhaustive retranslation of the *Serpentes Fragments* reveals an ancient religion that mirrors the modern-day Church of the Silver Flame to "a degree that boggles the imagination."

High priest Yurik Rendrich, one of yesterday's protest speakers, called Mourain's paper heresy, incitement to hatred, and appallingly bad scholarship. "One way or another, the Silver Flame will burn away dross like Dannad Mourain," he told the cheering crowd. "This church isn't ascended from snakes -- it is the living embodiment of creation's primal spark. All those whose souls have been touched by the Silver Flame know an everlasting truth that Mourain can't poison with his words."

With a full slate of orators scheduled for tomorrow, the protests at Morgrave University aren't likely to end anytime soon. The protestors have been peaceful for the most part, though scattered reports of fistfights between Silver Flame worshipers and university students have surfaced.

Each of the various sects and groups that make up the Church of the Silver Flame is vying with all the others to take a more prominent role in the Morgrave University protests. But the church leadership sounded a more cautious note on Far. Archierophant Ythana Morr said that the Church wasn't organizing the protests directly but would continue to monitor events at Morgrave University. She praised the faith and conviction of the protestors in a written statement yesterday. She didn't mention Mourain directly, referring only to only to "those beneath contempt, casting about in darkness and constricted by lies."

University chancellors refused comment on the protests or on Mourain's status with the university. Most classes are continuing as scheduled, but those taught by Mourain have been cancelled until further notice.

Mourain hasn't been seen in public since his paper was released last week. One of his research assistants, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Mourain had gone into seclusion because he was worried about a backlash from extremist elements of the Church of the Silver Flame.

Valley of Obelisks Girds for Sunthaw Gathering

News for Sul, Olarune 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Valley of Obelisks Girds for Sunthaw Gathering

XANDRAR—Hundreds of pilgrims are expected to descend on the river town of Sumberton next week, awaiting the thaw of Lake Daggerchill with song, dance, and joyous celebration.

The travelers, members of the “Benevolent Order of the Southern Sun,” make the trek annually to the banks of the Daggerchill River. The gathering sometimes lasts for weeks if a cold snap prevents the lake’s annual fall.

“Many of us bring our families [to Sunthaw]—it’s great for children to step away from their chores for a few weeks and remember what’s truly important: the joyous turning of winter into spring,” said Jurri Sensanack, Lodge Master for the Benevolent Order’s Xandrar chapter.

While in Sumberton, members of the Benevolent Order will arise before dawn to “Sing the Sun Awake,” an elaborate choral performance involving hundreds of singers from all over southern Khorvaire.

Many will also visit the crumbling obelisks that dot the farmland in the Daggerchill River valley—the structures that give the region its name.

“I obviously have an interest in ancient history, or I wouldn’t be a member of the Benevolent Order,” Sensanack said. “The obelisks are a tangible reminder that whatever our day-to-day problems are, we’re all part of something much greater. Something much older.”

The Benevolent Order of the Southern Sun takes great pride in its heritage. Members can trace their ancestry to ancient forebears from the mysterious continent of Sarlona who settled Khorvaire thousands of years ago.

“The Sunthaw festival is a touchstone to that rich heritage. It’s as accurate a recreation of an ancient Sarlonan festival as we can create,” Sensanack said.

About the Author

David Noonan is a designer/developer for Wizards of the Coast. Before coming to Wizards, he was a daily

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‘Lucky Sabletufts’ Stolen from Crystal Bridge Art Patron

News for Sul, Olarune 1st, 998

By David Noonan

‘Lucky Sabletufts’ Stolen from Crystal Bridge Art Patron

SHARN—Two jade statuettes depicting sabletuft housecats were taken on Zul from Kant Manor in the Crystal Bridge district.

Owner Haras Kant said he planned to offer a reward for the statuettes’ return that “would stagger the imagination.” He further warned the thieves that the statuettes would be impossible to sell due to their notoriety among art collectors.

“Everyone art dealer from here to Korth knows that I’m the rightful owner. Whoever took my cats will find that they’ve taken something that will bring them only trouble,” Kant said.

The statues, known to art patrons as the “Lucky Sabletufts,” are made of a peculiar dark-green jade. They have large rubies for their eyes and diamond-studded claws.

The “lucky” appellation for the statuettes is at least 300 years old. In prewar Sharn, Hansa d’Orien frequently brought the statuettes with her to various casinos, claiming they brought her good fortune at the gaming tables.

The statuettes remained in House Orien hands until they were purchased by Tybalt ir’Rhannock in a private auction shortly after the start of the Last War. When Breland commissioned ir’Rhannock as a naval officer, he brought the Lucky Sabletufts with him to sea. His war galley, the *Providential Order*, went down with all hands during the Battle of Mannasher’s Point in 985. But ir’Rhannock’s footlocker containing the statuettes was recovered amid the flotsam after the battle.

The Lucky Sabletufts were thus the property of the Breland Navy until a war surplus auction last year. Kant purchased them and has prominently displayed them in private but well-attended art exhibits throughout the fall and winter.

Belen Yorgan, commander of the city watch’s Sword Point garrison, said that a thorough investigation of the theft was under way.

“I have every confidence that we’ll quickly apprehend the thieves and return the sabletufts to their rightful owner,” he said.

Arson Suspected in String of Shop Fires

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Arson Suspected in String of Alchemist Shop Fires

SHARN—Five alchemist shops in the Cassan Bridge district have burned to the foundation in the last three weeks, and with high winds expected this week, district residents are worried that further blazes might spread.

Four of the five shops were owned by recent immigrants from the Shadow Marches, raising the specter of the anti-immigrant violence that flared up two years ago. But the fifth shop, Elixirs of Causewary, has been doing business on Wary Street for almost a century.

Because alchemists use open flame and caustic reagents in their mixtures, uncontrolled fires are not uncommon. Investigations into the specific origins of each fire are underway by the Sharn Watch, but no conclusions are available yet.

But the frequency of the fires leaves little doubt in the minds of Cassan Bridge residents that arson is to blame.

“I’ve had bucket brigades outside my window twice in the past two weeks,” district resident Unnao Thruan said. “You can’t tell me it’s just a coincidence.”

Watch Commander Silaena Cazal said shopkeepers in the district can do their part by cooperating with the city watch during their investigations.

“Whenever the public safety is threatened, we all have to make sacrifices. I hope that all of Cassan Bridge can pull together and end this unfortunate string of fires as soon as possible,” she said.

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Revival of Wyvern Hunt Takes 12 Wyverns

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Revival of Q'barran Wyvern Hunt Takes 12 Wyverns

NEWTHRONE—For the first time since the start of the Last War, aristocrats from across Khorvaire traveled to Q'Barra this month to hunt the reclusive, deadly silver wyverns.

The wyverns, possessed of uncommon cunning and a virulent poison, claimed 16 lives among the forty teams of hunters assembled at the invitation of King Sebastes ir'Kesslan.

But with a record 12 wyverns taken during the hunt, ir'Kesslan declared the hunt a "resounding success."

In a decree from the under-construction royal manor at Adderport, ir'Kesslan singled out three teams in particular for their hunting prowess.

A group led by Aundair's Thonan ir'Barandeau claimed the largest wyvern—one with a wingspan measuring 28 feet.

House Deneith's team, led by Ruhillia d'Deneith, presented the king with the first wyvern-head, acquired after only six hours of hunting.

And a hunter from the Eldeen Reaches known only as "Thousand" presented the king with a silver wyvern that he said he hunted without the aid of a team. His claim was obviously unverifiable, but King ir'Kesslan lavished praise on him in the decree.

Royal courtiers said the king was sufficiently pleased with the wyvern hunt that he planned on making it an annual event, as it was in the days of old Galifar. Persistent rumors further indicate that the king may don hunting garb and join the other hunters in the field next year.

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Guildhouse Robber Standoff Continues

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

Guildhouse Robber Standoff Continues; Fate of Captives Uncertain

SHARN—The standoff between a band of thieves and the Sharn Watch at Dragon Tower's Jeweler Guildhouse reached a second day, but the fate of approximately two dozen captives within the guildhouse remains unknown.

Sharn Watch Commander Belew Yorgan refused questions at the scene. The Sharn Watch has closed Martelluk Bridge, Jarrniki's Span, Crush Street and four blocks of Warren Street, and more than fifty members of the watch maintain a close vigil on the guildhouse.

A Watch sergeant, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that talks between the Sharn Watch and the thieves barricaded in the guildhouse are ongoing but sporadic.

The Watch believes that more than a dozen thieves remain within the guildhouse, including some wounded in the initial clash with guildhouse guards. Their identity remains unknown, although unconfirmed rumors throughout Dragon Towers say the thieves are members of the notorious "Bloodshot Crew."

The Jeweler's Guild crisis began in the early hours of Sar, when a heavily armed band of thieves infiltrated the guildhouse, intent on plundering its wealth. A battle with guild guards ensued, spilling out into Crush Street and drawing the attention of the Sharn Watch. The thieves returned to the guildhouse and barricaded themselves inside, taking several guild guards and apprentice jewelers captive.

Complicating any rescue attempts are the guildhouse's many defenses, including traps and magically warded doors. Guild masters say they are coordinating their efforts with the City Watch, but that the thieves apparently turned some of the traps against the guild guards during the initial break-in.

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Quarantine Lifted for Smoky Towers

News for Sul, Therendor 1st, 998

By David Noonan

‘Silent Plague’ Quarantine Lifted for Smoky Towers

SHARN—The Sharn Watch lifted the quarantine for the Smoky Towers district at dawn today, saying the baffling “Silent Plague” is not contagious.

The Watch’s Blackened Book investigators still seek the source of the mysterious affliction, which leaves its victims pale and unable to speak.

“Our magical investigations have confirmed that the name ‘Silent Plague’ is actually a misnomer. It’s a curse, not a disease,” said Kareyn Allandidor, senior inquisitive for the Blackened Book.

So far forty-two residents of the district suffer from the Silent Plague. Among the victims are Mardan Kluhir, Jordren d’Phiarlan, “Needles” Norrick, Gransha Fleetfinger, and several other noted singers.

But the Silent Plague isn’t limited to the entertainers. Unndro Bhalask, special assistant to Councillor Caskar Halavik, has the affliction.

Most of the Silent Plague’s victims remain in seclusion. The *Sharn Inquisitive* will continue its efforts to find and interview (in writing) one or more of the plague victims.

The lifting of the quarantine means that the Children’s Charity Parade scheduled for Zul can keep to its traditional route through the district. Parade organizer Thanim Lariendas said a high turnout is expected despite lingering fears about the Silent Plague.

“I appreciate the Watch being careful with our health—no one wants the plague,” he said. “The Watch says that Smoky Towers is perfectly safe, and the children have been looking forward to this parade all year.”

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Carnival of the Sublime Opens Next Week

News for Sul, Eyre 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Carnival of the Sublime Opens Next Week

FAIRHAVEN—House Thuranni's "Carnival of the Sublime" returns next week for its annual visit to Fairhaven, with Carnival organizers promising "more music, more magic, more fun."

This year a massive tent city southwest of the city will host the carnival, as House Thuranni hopes to avoid the heavy crowds that greeted last year's carnival at Wharfwall Park in the Whiteroof Ward.

"Last year was the first time we've done the carnival since the Last War ended," said Hanshastra d'Thuranni. "We were pleased at the enthusiastic response from the citizens of Aundair, but a little overwhelmed as well. This year, we know what to expect."

The new carnival grounds can accommodate more than a thousand fairgoers, d'Thurrani said.

Posters and handbills advertising the carnival have been seen throughout Fairhaven. They promise nightly performances from Myurdan Phoenixfire, master of illusion, a lute-and-flute quartet led by Obranna d'Thurrani, and games of skill and chance.

Handbills also promise "wondrous beasts from across Khorvaire and the deadly jungles of Xen'drik." Hanshastra d'Thurrani said her House is still negotiating with the crown to permit the importation for display of specific creatures.

"Unfortunately, we're still working some issues out with the authorities. Carnivalgoers will have to come see for themselves what wonders we'll display," she said.

Also uncertain is whether the controversial "seer of the future" Valreyka d'Thurrani will be part of this year's Carnival. Last year she gave readings to long lines of carnival goers, many of whom found her predictions uncannily accurate. But in the last six months, she's been deported from both Thrane and Karrnath. In Thrane, her deportation proceedings remain under seal but were handled by inquisitors specializing in heresies against the Silver Flame. Karnnath simply escorted her to the border, with no official reason given.

Hanshastra d'Thurrani refused to discuss Valreyka's presence or absence at the upcoming fair, saying only that

“those seeking to peer into their own futures will not walk away disappointed.”

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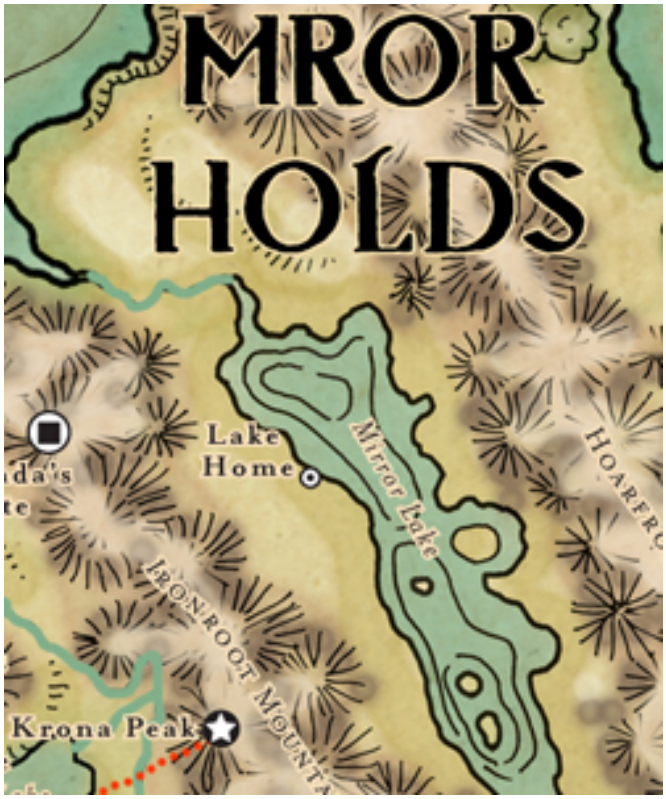
Last Heir Seeks Iron Council Audience

News for Sul, Eyre 8th, 998

By David Noonan

‘Last Heir of the Noldruns’ Seeks Iron Council Audience



KRONA PEAK—Torlan Mroranon announced on Zor that he would forward a Speaker’s Petition to the full Iron Council on behalf of the controversial figure Hrun Noldrun, the self-described “last heir of the Noldruns.”

The council will consider the petition when it reconvenes in two weeks’ time. If approved, then Hrun would be summoned to speak before the Iron Council.

Since Hrun’s arrival in Krona Peak last month, he’s sought official recognition of his clan heritage and settlement of his birthright: the Noldrunhold and the ruined fortress-town of Noldrunethrone.

But the circumstances of his arrival—badly burned, wearing battered armor, and raving about unseen enemies—leave significant doubt over whether he’s truly a member of Clan Noldrun, eradicated by unknown assailants more than four centuries ago.

Facing questions before an ad-hoc collection of clan chiefs last week, Hrun correctly recited several of the Noldrun lineages, but claimed amnesia when asked how he got to Krona Peak and where his wounds came from.

Claimants to the vacant Noldrunhold are not uncommon, with one causing a stir every decade or so. Many were confidence artists seeking rights to the mineral wealth of the Korran’s Maw mines, despite the fact that the mines and Noldrunhold as a whole are infested with dangerous monsters. Others made claims based on novel interpretations of genealogical records—interpretations the Iron Council ultimately rejected.

Some clan chiefs oppose Noldrun claimants on principle, saying that granting them an audience before the Iron Council will only bring more pretenders to Noldrunhold out of the stonework.

But other clans, including the influential Clan Mroranon, support Hrun’s right to address the Iron Council and make a formal claim.

The petition, penned in Torlan Mroranon’s own hand, doesn’t directly state that the Mroranons support Hrun’s claim. It refers to the claim as “worthy of consideration by this august body.”

Council watchers say that the Mroranons may be impressed enough by Hrun's claims that they're trying to broker a compromise. Rather than accepting or rejecting Hrun's claim of Noldrun heritage, the Iron Council could grant provisional acceptance of Hrun's claim, contingent on him reclaiming Noldrunhold for the dwarves and restarting mining operations at Korran's Maw.

Such provisional acceptance might mollify those clan chiefs opposed to Noldrun claimants.

"What better way to deal with a fake Noldrun than to simply say: 'You want Noldrunhold? Then claim it with your axe!'" said clan chief Garrek Soldorak. "If the end result is that we're feeding a bunch of pretenders to the monsters there, so be it."

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Breland Commissions New Warships

News for Sul, Eyre 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Breland Commissions New Warships to Combat Southern Pirates

WROAT—King Boranel announced on Zor that he planned to commission more than a dozen new warships to ply the Thunder Sea on antipiracy patrols.

“Let my voice carry to the south on winds of justice: Any ship flying the bear is under the protection of the great nation of Breland. Crawl back into your holes, villains, or face the wrath of our new warships,” said the crown decree.

Construction of the warships will begin in Sharn within the month. Negotiations described as “routine” are under way with Zilargo to obtain that nation’s expertise in naval architecture.

The ships will likely be christened by autumn, perhaps by Boranel or another member of the royal family.

The announcement of the warship construction set off a flurry of court activity when Admiral Telley ir’Nellish noted that the ships would be named after “Breland’s bravest soldiers from the Last War.” Nobles and retired military officers scrambled to put together petitions touting their valor during the Last War in hopes of having a ship named after them.

An attaché to ir’Nellish said on condition of anonymity that the new warships may wait on the docks for trained crew. The naval officer corps, depleted during the western naval battles near the war’s end, still hasn’t recovered, the attaché said.

“I never thought we’d wind up with more ships than captains,” the attaché said. “But you can build a warship in less than a year, and it takes a lot longer than that to build an officer.”

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Dozens Claim to Have Seen Lantern-Bearer

News for Sul, Eyre 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Dozens Claim to Have Seen Lantern-Bearer of Keshaware

SHARN—The mysterious—and some say folkloric—figure known as the Lantern-Bearer of Keshaware has been seen in Sharn this week at least four times, eyewitnesses said.

“He had these dirty white robes, a long gray beard, and tousled hair,” said Maretha Ducain, a cobbler from the Underlook district. “The lantern was covered in jewels—so much so that the jewels themselves seemed to be glowing. And just like in the woodcarvings, he has the lantern on the end of a staff, and he walks all bent over.”

Tales of the Lantern-Bearer of Keshaware are at least centuries old, said Charral Meers, a professor of history at Morgrave University.

“It’s said that the original Lantern-Bearer was Keshaware, Lhazaar’s navigator some three thousand years ago. When Lhazaar discovered Khorvaire, she wanted to establish a settlement right away. But Keshaware wanted to explore the whole continent,” he said.

“The folklore gets a little unclear at this point, but somehow Keshaware gets his wish—or he’s cursed. He won’t die until the light of his lantern has shined on every part of Khorvaire,” he said.

Meers noted that about two centuries ago, Keshaware became a popular subject for painters and other artists, probably because he can be depicted amid any landscape, and he brings his own light source with him.

That’s when the name got twisted around, from Keshaware, the bearer of the lantern, to the Bearer of the Lantern of Keshaware, to the Lantern-Bearer of Keshaware, Meers said.

Meers noted that about fifty years ago, Karrnath had a spate of Keshaware sightings—but the lantern-bearer was a young female.

“This Karrnath sightings were probably a hoax of some sort, but there’s another possible explanation,” Meers said.

“It might be that the lantern itself holds the power, or the curse, or what have you. Maybe the lantern-bearer can pass on Keshaware’s legacy by giving the lantern to someone else, who then walks around Khorvaire, unable to die,” he said.

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Drystone Pulls Out of Korranberg Competition

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Drystone Pulls Out of Korranberg Statuary Competition

KORRANBERG—Declaring that the collapse of its massive clockwork horse was the work of saboteurs, engineers from the Korranberg Library's Drystone college announced on Wir that they wouldn't attempt to rebuild the statue.

Before its collapse last Mol night, the metal skeleton of the horse, dubbed "Fleet Providence," stood nearly 40 feet tall, and the grinding of its gears could be heard across the city.

"If the doyens can't keep the other colleges from wrecking our work, then there's no point in rebuilding Fleet Providence," said Drystone senior researcher Tendro ir'Hushaan. "Although we're withdrawing, I want my team to take pride in a statue so great that the other colleges knew their only hope was to cheat."

High councilor Alina Alrene ir'Korran said that so far, Library officials have found no evidence that the collapse had any external cause.

"Drystone's decision is disappointing, and their forfeit reflects poorly on the whole college, I'm afraid. What happened to the spirit of experimentation?" she asked.

In the end, Drystone's refusal to rebuild their statue will leave a gaping hole along Warren Street. Each of the other colleges is building a statue to decorate the newly widened road. A jury will select the best statue, which will earn points for the college that built it. The Library's eight colleges compete fiercely in a number of academic, arcane, and athletic competitions throughout the academic year.

Drystone's decision to withdraw from the statuary competition means that another college will almost certainly wrest first place in the overall standings from them. Currently the Blackdragon college of Alchemy and the Morridan college of Mathematics are tied behind Drystone, with the Balinor's Horn college of natural sciences running fourth.

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Rampaging Elementals Blamed for Wildfires

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Rampaging Elementals Blamed for Thrane Wildfires

FLAMEKEEP—More than 10,000 acres of the Fields of Arolan continue to burn in central Thrane, the result of devastating wildfires started by marauding fire elementals.

Evacuation preparations are under way in the towns of Athandra and Avaroth, and the village of Tellyn has already been cleared of inhabitants.

The Lord of Castle Morningcrest has refused a Flame decree to abandon his keep, although he's released all but immediate family members for evacuation.

Settlements near the wildfires are employing both mundane firefighting techniques (such as cutting firebreaks across the fields) and magical responses (such as weather control and various water-based summonings). But because some fire elementals are believed to be amid the flames, the wildfire's path isn't predictable.

Thrane authorities and representatives of the Silver Flame promised an investigation into the cause of the blaze as soon as it's contained. Some fringe sects of the Silver Flame regard fire elementals to be sacred beings that cleanse only the unworthy, a notion that Silver Flame orthodoxy regards as "a miserable, wrongheaded attempt to justify arson." Rumors among the evacuees routinely place blame among such fringe sects.

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Low Tides May Reveal Wreckage

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Low Tides May Reveal Wreckage of Karrn 'Tribute Fleet'

REKKENMARK—Unusually low tides next month might expose the sunken ships that once carried Khorvaire's greatest treasures to Karrn the Conqueror, an academy scholar said on Zor.

Jarragan ir'Krannau, a "historical astronomer" affiliated with Rekkenmark Academy's Karrn Studies program, said the northern shore of Karrnath could briefly experience minus tides of 10 feet to 20 feet. And along the eastern shore of Karrn Bay, known for its tidal surges, the waters might recede even further.

The minus tide might reveal more than a dozen galleys that sunk in a sudden storm in –980 YK. The ships were part of the "Tribute Fleet" that brought gold, jewels and dragonshards from various regional warlords to Karrn the Conqueror, ir'Krannau said.

The minus tide may attract some fortune hunters, ir'Krannau said, but the remote, dangerous terrain near the wreckage site would make a treasure-seeking expedition difficult.

"There's also no guarantee—someone may have already plundered the ships," he said. "And the records from the time aren't clear on whether the fleet was inbound or outbound when it sank."

Regardless of what's in the hold, careful study of the tribute fleet represents a treasure-trove of historical lore for scholars, ir'Krannau said. Shipwrecks in northern waters tend to be well-preserved, so scholars will get a glimpse at life aboard Karrn's navy two millennia ago.

"At the academy, we glory in every detail about Karrn's land campaigns, but his naval efforts have always been in the background," he said.

A team of Rekkenmark Academy scholars leaves next week for the Karrn Bay coastline, ir'Krannau said. When the tidal outflow reveals the ships, the scholars will learn as much as they can before the waters reclaim the tribute fleet.

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Repairs Interrupt Lightning Rail

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Repairs Interrupt Starilaskur-Sterngate Lightning Rail

STARILASKUR—House Orien said on Wir that avalanche-clearing operations north of Sterngate would prevent lightning rails from traveling south into Zilargo for at least another week.

Station master Laara d'Orien said that the House had teams of excavators working around the clock to clear rockfalls that buried the lightning rail path at several points in the foothills of the northern Seawall Mountains.

"We expect some rail maintenance delays every spring, but the extent of the avalanches is unprecedented," she said. "The Starilaskur-Korranberg route is important to us, and we want to restore service as soon as possible."

The House is compensating ticket holders unable to travel as planned, she said. And House Orien is using the opportunity to unveil a new service: "Splendor Caravans." The caravans feature comfortable horse-drawn passenger coaches and many of the amenities that lightning rail passengers expect.

"The roads along the Seawall Mountains are in fine shape, and we know that for a lot of our passengers, the journey is as important as the destination. The Splendor Caravans are slower than the lightning rail, true, but they're a luxurious experience," d'Orien said.

The Splendor Caravans run between Starilaskur and Sterngate, where lightning rail cars trapped on the far side of the avalanches take passengers to Zolanberg and Korranberg. The journey takes 10 days.

House Orien may eventually add scheduled Spendor Caravans to other routes that don't currently get lightning rail service, d'Orien said.

The cause of the avalanches is unknown and remains under investigation, d'Orien said.

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Fugitives at Large After Prison Break

News for Sul, Dravago 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Dozens of Fugitives at Large After Harrowgard Prison Break

SIGILSTAR—A violent escape attempt from Harrowgard Prison on Zor left 18 guards dead and scores of criminals dead or fleeing into the wilds of southern Thrane.

Thrane army units from nearby Harrowgard Fortress have cordoned off the prison and are investigating the circumstances of the prison break, the first escape since the prison's construction in the mid 940s.

Cardinal Yannick, expected to visit the site on Zol two days, issued a public prayer that commended the sacrifice of the slain guards and condemned the criminals for their "cowardice in the face of a justly applied sentence."

"We have no doubt that none can escape the Silver Flame's ultimate justice, no matter how far they may flee," she said. "The wise prisoner has an attitude of penance, hoping to have a soul forged anew in flames of silver. But the craven fugitive is a creature of instinct, willing to do evil to satisfy a base urge for freedom."

Yannick also urged residents of southern Thrane to be vigilant and report any suspicious travelers.

"Let those who would flee proper judgment know that justice is more than a knight's lance. Justice is also the eyes of the innkeeper, the ears of the woodcutter in the forest, and the stout heart of every Thrane that names a criminal on the run," she said.

Details on the prison break remain sketchy. Sometime after midnight, a fire broke out along the prison ramparts. A confused battle broke out between rioting prisoners, guards, and possibly mercenaries or bandits attacking the prison from outside its walls. By dawn, one wing of the prison's main building had collapsed—hours after most prisoners escaped or died in the clashes with guards.

Most of Harrowgard Prison's inmates were sentenced to long terms during the Last War, often by courts martial for crimes including desertion and gross insubordination. Starting last year, the church of the Silver Flame has taken a more active role in the rehabilitation of prisoners there, offering guidance in religious matters and apprentice-level instruction in several trades.

Brelish Army commanders along Breland's border with Thrane have stepped up patrols in response to the Harrowgard prison break.

"I figure that if you just broke out of prison, the most natural thing in the world is to try to get across a border," said Major Ganndo Annatail, "And even a fugitive isn't going to head into the Mournland—although some of these guys might have been imprisoned so long that they think it's still Cyre."

Any fugitives from Harrowgard caught in Breland will be remanded back to Thrane's custody, Annatail said.

‘Dragonslayer’ Sniper Claims Sixth Victim

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan

‘Dragonslayer’ Sniper Claims Sixth Victim

SHARN—The mysterious crossbow sniper known to the City Watch as the “Dragonslayer” shot and killed a high-ranking member of House Kundarak on Far night, then posted handbills taunting the inability of the authorities to stop the sniper attacks.

The attack, made at dusk as the victim left a restaurant on Bruneau Street in Korranath, bore the hallmarks of previous attacks: a single magic crossbow bolt shot from a great distance and a corona of fire around the victim that scorches the ground, leaving a black outline around the corpse.

The name of the victim, an elderly male dwarf, was unavailable at press time.

Watch Commander Belew Yorgan expressed confidence that the Dragonslayer would soon be brought to justice, either by the city watch or by House Deneith’s Sentinel Marshals.

“It’s easy to get caught up in the sensational details of these crimes and miss the important point: That this guy is a cold-blooded murderer too cowardly to face his victims,” he said. “We have a number of promising leads, and I think the next handbill you read will be the one announcing his execution date.”

The Dragonslayer has been touting his prowess with handbills and pamphlets that appear after each murder. Last night was no exception; handbills scattered across the Tradefair district criticized House Kundarak lending practices and taunted authorities.

“I am around every corner and atop every roof,” said one handbill acquired by the *Sharn Inquisitive*. “Neither the jackboot stooges of Sharn’s corpulent councilors nor the brutes-for-coin in the pay of the incestuous dragontainted houses will ever catch me.”

Harrina Thandalask, a sergeant in the watch’s Blackened Book division, said that the handbills are being posted along crowded thoroughfares by someone using an *unseen servant* spell. Such magic makes it difficult to apprehend whomever’s distributing the handbills, she said.

“People don’t notice the handbills going up right away, and when someone gets curious, the so-called Dragonslayer or a confederate just drops the spell and slips away,” she said.

The Dragonslayer’s victims have been spread across the city. They include:

- Ilya d’Cannith, killed Nymm 2 in Ashblack.
- Endari d’Tharashk, killed Dravago 20 in the Clifftop district.
- Lasca d’Ghallanda, killed Dravago 17 in the North Market district.
- Chenni d’Jorasco, killed Dravago 11 in Seventh Tower.
- Torlak d’Sivis, killed Dravago 4 in the Callestan district. While the crime scene bore many similarities to subsequent Dragonslayer attacks, no handbills have ever appeared claiming responsibility for the attack.

Rivals Join Forces for Attainder Bill

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Rivals ir'Tannak and ir'Lann Join Forces for Attainder Bill

WROAT—An unlikely alliance between bitter political foes Kurlo ir'Tannak and Hansa ir'Lann means that the Silver Lake Attainder Decree is likely to pass Parliament by month's end.

"Never let it be said that the Tannak family will put personality before what's good for Breland," ir'Tannak said. "The merits of this decree are beyond question, and I'll be proud to cast my vote for it.

"Let the past stay where it is," said ir'Lann in a rare speech before Parliament. "Bury the past with all the honor that you bury the bravest soldier, but then march onward and carry the day for Breland."

While their speeches on Wir sounded common themes, the pair have oratorical styles as opposite as their previous positions. Kurlo ir'Tannak's speech alternated between fiery rhetoric against "enemies of Breland, foreign and domestic" and folksy appeals for support from his "lords and brothers." Hansa ir'Lann's quavering voice could barely be heard in the upper galleries—a reason why most of his legislative work is done behind the scenes.

If ir'Tannak and ir'Lann both vote in favor of the attainder decree, it will mark the first time they've ever cast their votes together, excepting strictly ceremonial decrees. As recently as last year, ir'Tannak accused ir'Lann of treason and ir'Lann called ir'Tannak "an unrepentant drunkard" in the wake of the controversial High Seas Accords.

Their rivalry predates their postwar service in Parliament. It's widely believed that ir'Tannak and ir'Lann engaged in fisticuffs in the middle of the Battle of Red Creek in 979, when both were colonels under legendary General Bollandar, separately sent to seize a key bridge. Records of the incident remain sealed, and given the folkloric quality of the tale, its veracity remains unknown.

If passed by Parliament and signed by King Boranel, the attainder decree would mandate the forfeiture of property belonging to 14 family estates along the southern shore of Silver Lake. Those families, citing Thrane advances along the northern front, refused to send manor guards to break a Droaamite siege of Six Kings in 988.

Ownership of the estates would pass to the crown.

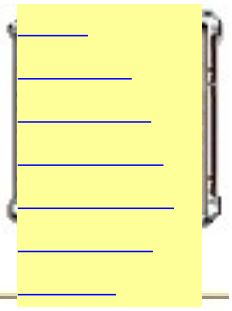
About the Author

David Noonan is a designer/developer for Wizards of the Coast. Before coming to Wizards, he was a daily newspaper reporter in Washington state. Apparently the city hall beat is good practice for an **Eberron** campaign.

Last Starwind Sailor Dies at 184

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan



Last *Starwind* Sailor Dies at 184

STORMHOME—Corvin d'Lyrandar, the last surviving member of the famed *Starwind* airship voyage, died on Zor surrounded by family at his residence in Stormhome. He was 184.

One of the fourteen crew members that returned with the battered airship in 814 YK, d'Lyrandar later served his house throughout the Last War, eventually captaining the Countess Karlia, an elemental galleon that plied the Bitter Sea. He retired from the seas when the Last War ended, family members said.

But his fame was set when the badly listing *Starwind* reappeared over the skies of Sharn in 841. The *Starwind* was believed lost at sea after a hurricane struck the western coast of Khorvaire in 839.

But Captain Tessian d'Lyrandar told a wondrous tale of his airship being sucked into a vortex leading to strange lands beyond Eberron. Fictionalized versions of Tessian's logbook started turning up shortly after the Starwind's return, becoming something of a literary genre unto themselves in the mid-850s.

The actual logbooks remain under lock and key with House Lyrandar, but public statements from Tessian indicate that the *Starwind* visited multiple lands of "surpassing strangeness" and also visited each of Eberron's known continents, if only briefly.

Captain Tessian d'Lyrandar died in battle with pirates in 880. His will included extensive provisions for splitting the "recovered booty of the *Starwind* voyage." Responding to hundreds of inquiries from treasure-seekers, House Lyrandar elders said that the Starwind's hold was empty when it returned. Furthermore, the airship's logs gave no indication of a discovered treasure.

Asked about Tessian's will last year, Corvin d'Lyrandar dismissed it as "Just a joke. There's no 'treasure of *Starwind*,' that's for sure. We saw a lot of strange things, but nothing that would make us rich. In any case, the House would get the treasure, not us."

With no direct descendants, Corvin d'Lyrandar's estate will be auctioned within the House next month.

About the Author

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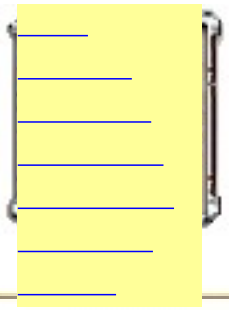
Key Advisor to Crown Retires

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan



Key Advisor to Crown Retires

WROAT—Count Narvian ir'Turlendess, a trusted advisor to King Boranel on diplomatic and military matters, has retired to his family estate in southern Breland, the court announced on Zul.

Narvian was among the Breland court's strongest inclusionist voices, arguing that even Breland's enemies should be signatories to the Treaty of Thronehold and various side agreements.

Inclusionists often quote his "Marra Won't Come Home" speech before the Breland Parliament in 995. Throughout the speech, ir'Turlendess spoke movingly of his daughter Marra, captured and executed by Sora Kell forces in 987. But despite his loss, ir'Turlendess said, Droaam should be included in Thronehold negotiations. Barring negotiations with other nations, "no matter how repulsive," would be counterproductive and won't bring his daughter back. Though his arguments failed to persuade the crown, ir'Turlendess remained an influential figure at court throughout the Thronehold negotiations.

"Narvian's voice was always clear and wise, and his eyes were always focused on what was best for Breland," said King Boranel in a crown decree that accompanied the announcement. "It is with great sadness that I watch him depart Wroat, and I'll miss his honest, well-reasoned advice."

Narvian ir'Turlendess learned statecraft as a regional representative to the Ministry of the Exchequer in 960, charged with advocating for southwest Breland's landowners on taxation issues. In 971 he received his first major appointment within the ministry and spent most of the 980s as the crown's chief advisor on military funding issues. His role expanded to include diplomatic responsibilities near the Last War's end; he was Breland's representative to the Thronehold working group tasked with gradually drawing down the armies of the signatory nations.

Since the end of the Last War, ir'Turlendess acted as an unofficial ambassador to parts of Khorvaire that the Treaty of Thronehold didn't grant nation-state status to, such as Droaam and the Cyran refugees.

The crown is widely expected to confer a significant honorary title upon Narvian ir'Turlendess during its month-end proclamation.

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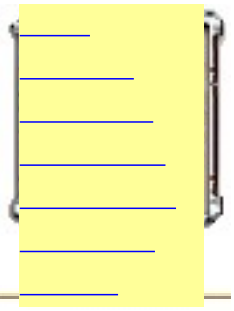
War Widow Land Grant Lottery Set

News for Lharvion 22nd, 998

By David Noonan



"War Widow" Land Grant Lottery Set for 28th of Barrakas

FAIRHAVEN—Queen Aurala has set a date for the long-anticipated land-grant lottery: the 28th of Barrakas.

A court decree on Far set a date and drawing procedure for the lottery, set to take place at noon in Fairhold's Vermillion Pavilion. But the decree noted that some eligibility requirements for specific land parcels are still under review, leaving unclear who'll be able to place lots for some of the more sought-after properties.

Although it's widely referred to as the "war widow" lottery, only some parcels are designated specifically for widows of soldiers who fell in Aundair's service during the Last War. Preliminary drafts of the lottery parcel list have shown a wide array of eligibility requirements. Many parcels will be given to those with relatives lost in the Last War, while others are set aside for Aundair's veterans. Most of the prime parcels have additional requirements of noble title, sometimes of specific families living nearby.

While the crown decree takes pains to point out the Queen's generosity in giving away large tracts of land, the land-grant lottery is expected to fill Aundair's coffers in the long-term. Many of the parcels in the lottery are crumbling, vacant castles with significant upkeep costs and no arable land nearby. Once removed from the crown's rolls, the land parcels become taxable property once again. Thus the crown is both spared upkeep and may garner revenue from the land-grant lottery.

The land-grant lottery was originally scheduled for last month, but has been twice delayed as Aundairian courts adjudicated claims from distant relatives and other parties seeking to keep specific parcels out of the lottery. In many cases, ownership of a parcel fell to the crown when its owner died in the war and no inheritor was available. But once a parcel appears on the list for the lottery, "second cousins, secret wives, and every con artist in Aundair have come out of the woodwork" to make an ownership claim, said one magistrate speaking on condition of anonymity.

About the Author

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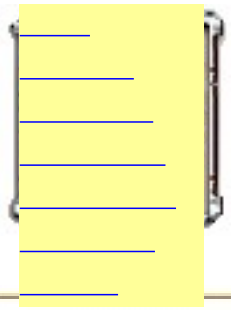
Midnight Battery Was Politically Motivated

News for Lharvion 22nd, 998

By David Noonan



Council Aspirant Says Midnight Battery Was ‘No Doubt’ Politically Motivated

SHARN—Gandrall Nurri, campaigning to replace Thurik Davandi as the Upper Menthis represenative on the Sharn Council, said on Sar that there was “no doubt” that his severe beating in front of an upscale Menthis restaurant last week was politically.

“Sharn politics is what it is, and I’ve been around long enough to not be surprised that my political enemies would resort to thuggery,” he said from the balcony of his Platinate home. “But I also know that you only use violence when you’re losing the battle of ideas. And that’s what I’m waging: a campaign of ideas.”

Nurri hopes to be named councilor for Upper Menthis on the 9th of Rhaan, and he’s been speaking publicly in the district nearly every day for the last month. Crowd reaction to his “Clean Up Sharn” platform has been mixed.

Three dark-garbed assailants attacked Nurri last Zor as he was departing Galdin’s Garden, a popular restaurant in the Seventh Tower district of Upper Menthis. Nurri was thrown from a nearby bridge, but managed to cling to a buttress until passersby rescued him. Nurri’s attackers are still at large.

Davandi denied any connection with the attack on Nurri.

“Ultimately, it’s for Upper Menthis to decide whether I’m an effective voice for their interests,” he said. “I think if you look at what we’ve done lately—new bridges in Den’iyas, stronger City Watch patrols in Platinate and Seventh Tower, and steady funding for Morgrave University—I think it’s clear that Upper Menthis is in good hands.”

About the Author

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Karrnathi Laborers Make Grisly Find

News for Lharvion 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Karrnathi Laborers Make Grisly Find

KORTH—Laborers regrading the cliffs south of Vurgenslye have unearthed more than one hundred humanoid skeletons—all bearing the same injury.

Each skull found over the course of the last two weeks has had a three-inch circular hole carved in the center of the forehead. The rest of the skeletons had no unusual markings.

Nearly one-third of the 400 laborers have walked off the job, said foreman Jerrit Alpach.

“It’s a bit better now that we’re working further north, but for a while last week you would find one of these skeletons every ten minutes or so,” he said. You’d turn over a spadeful of earth, and there’d be a three-eyed skull staring up at you.”

Preliminary divination magic performed on the site indicated that the skulls were buried there shortly before the start of the Last War. Priests of the Blood of Vol have taken custody of the skulls for further study.

Nearby residents recall no unusual disappearances or murders during the time when the skulls would have been buried.

The cliffs south of Vurgenslye have long been locally known for their frequent, treacherous mudslides. The regrade effort is a massive undertaking to turn the cliffs into a gentle, farmable slope leading down to Scions Sound.

About the Author

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Thrane Promises Return of Minnarek Friezes

News for Lharvion 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Thrane Promises Return of Minnarek Friezes

SHARN—The Minnarek Friezes, taken by Thrane soldiers during the Last War, will be returned to Breland by year's end, said Anador ir'Laisha, speaking on behalf of the Keeper of the Flame.

The twelve friezes, which depict in bas-relief torch-bearing men on horseback, are considered some of the best examples of pre-Galifaran sculpture. Nearly 2,000 years old, they were originally created by the blind sculptor Minnarek as a tribute to Karrn the Conquerer and decorated a shrine in Hatheril that commemorated Karrn's victory in the Battle of Brey.

In 959, Thrane soldiers removed the friezes from the Hatheril shrine because their subject matter included torch flames. The friezes were taken to Flamekeep, where they remained on display until the signing of the Treaty of Thronehold two years ago.

"All of Thrane hopes that the restoration of these friezes can mark a new stage in our relations with Breland," ir'Laisha said. "Now that the war is over, a lot of these artistic treasures, swept up in the winds of war, can be returned to their rightful owners."

Thrane is eager to establish a commission with artists and historians from all of the Thronehold signatories to establish procedures for the return of national treasures, she said.

"We've made our views on artistic heritage well known, and now that Khorvaire is at peace, we'll push more strongly for all nations to return objects of artistic and cultural relevance. Karrnath's continued custody of the Gorith Handmaiden Tryptych, for example, continues to sadden the hearts of art lovers everywhere," she said.

About the Author

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Tornadoes Emerge From Mournland

News for Lharvion 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Tornadoes Emerge From Mournland

STARILASKUR—Strangely persistent tornadoes have emerged from the Mournland this week, destroying barns and farmhouses in their wake.

The tornadoes appeared during sunny, cloudless weather, heading west toward Sterngate and through the hills south of New Cyre. Unlike weather-related tornadoes, these Mournland tornadoes often remain stationary for hours at a time, then lurch forward without warning. They move only during the daytime.

Thus far, they've only menaced some farms and small thorps. But all of Eastern Breland worries that the tornadoes will continue to move east and threaten more heavily populated areas.

"We're used to all sorts of strange things coming out of the Mournland," said Sterngate-area farmer Nezberro Lallick. "But we've never seen anything like this. I've got riders that watch the borders for monsters and the like, but these cyclones aren't like zombies or whatever crawls out of the Mournland."

"How can you fight off a tornado? It turned my barn into kindling," he said.

A proclamation from Prince Oargev ir'Wynarn reported the dispatch of New Cyran cavalry to the vicinity of the cyclones. Sages are being consulted for further countermeasures, the proclamation said.

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Aundair Army Captures Rebel Leader

News for Barrakas 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Aundair Army Captures Rebel Leader

WYR—Aundair has captured the druid known as Amleerin the Fox, a proclamation from the army's headquarters in Wyr announced on Zor.

Amleerin, a member of the mysterious Ashbound sect, has been wanted by Aundair's border patrols for eight months following a series of raids across the Wynarn River northeast of Lake Galifar.

Throughout the spring and summer, villages have been reduced to smoldering ruins with a distinctive glowing sigil inscribed in the trunk of a nearby tree.

The attacks reached their apex in Nymm, when the village of Jarran in the hills south of Windshire was burned to the ground, killing more than 200 residents. Authorities were unable to determine why none of the residents fled from the flames. All were found in their residences, as if they succumbed in their sleep.

Amleerin was captured after a pitched battle on the banks of the Wynarn River. An Aundair border patrol unit cordoned off the area after independent scouts working for the Aundair military reported contact with Amleerin and a small band of marauders.

"These brave soldiers slowly drew the cordon closer, fighting back escape efforts from the arsonists and murderers," an army staff proclamation read. "In the end, Amleerin had no choice but to stand on the banks of the River Wynarn and surrender to the justice of Aundair."

Unconfirmed reports from the Eldeen Reaches suggest that the Wardens of the Wood were also hunting down Amleerin for attacks on hamlets on the western side of the Wynarn River.

Amleerin will transported under heavy guard to Fairhaven, where he'll be tried for multiple counts of arson, murder, and related crimes.

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Feathered Serpents Seen Writhing Above Sharn

News for Barrakas 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Feathered Serpents Seen Writhing Above Sharn

SHARN—Two feathered serpent-creatures known as couatls put on an extensive aerial display over Sharn's Clifftop district, sometimes intertwining as they dove under bridges and around city towers on Zor.

Eyewitnesses saw the creatures shortly afternoon in the vicinity of Zellek's Spire, the long-abandoned home of a former court wizard who entered the Mournland shortly after the Day of Mourning in search of his daughter. Neither has been seen since.

With their brilliant wing plumage, the two couatls quickly attracted a crowd. Over the course of the next three hours, they flew above the Clifftop streets, sometimes too fast for the eye to follow, sometimes hovering in midair.

"It made me wish I had wings," said Looran Prallovek, a fruit cart vendor on Kuresh Street. "I just couldn't take my eyes off them—it was if the air was solid like the ground."

Morgrave University professor of xenoanthropology Guriam Jenn said that the couatls were likely undertaking the Ritual of Gav-Hauranazh, a complex social ritual that confers elder status on a particularly noteworthy couatl. While Jenn was not a witness to the display on Zol, he saw a Ritual of Gav-Hauranazh performed in Qbarra that matches eyewitness descriptions.

But noted Xen'drik explorer Mallan Yorna, a witness to the couatls, offered a different explanation. "A social ritual? Maybe," he said. "But what I saw had a recreational component to it, if you catch my drift."

About the Author

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Forward Sora Kell Petition to Thronehold

News for Barrakas 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Forward Sora Kell Petition to Thronehold, Karrnathi Ambassador Says

KORTH—Recent overtures from the Daughters of Sora Kell deserve consideration from the Treaty of Thronehold nations, said ambassador Jurneya ir'Hauptroch in advance of a diplomatic mission to Breland, Droaam, and Zarash'ak in the Shadow Marches.

"With each passing year, conditions improve in Droaam," she said. "While the nation of Karrnath continues to have important differences with the Daughters of Sora Kell, it's increasingly apparent that they have de facto control of the region."

Within the last month, capitals across Khorvaire have received missives bearing the seal of Sora Katra, one of the trio of hags that rules Droaam.

The exact contents of each letter aren't known, but those received by Breland and Aundair sought advantageous trade terms and a dramatic reduction in standing armies in western Khorvaire.

The Karrnathi crown also received a communiqué from the Sora Katra, ir'Hauptroch said. Its contents are still under consideration and remain under royal seal.

But based on the Breland and Aundair letters, court watchers believe that Droaam is asking for terms that would functionally make it a Treaty of Thronehold nation, subject to all the treaty's rights and strictures.

In 993, the Daughters of Sora Kell unsuccessfully petitioned to be part of the talks that eventually led to the Treaty of Thronehold. At the time, Karrnath objected that the hags weren't truly ruling a nation-state. Other nations had their own reasons for denying the Sora Kell petitions; Brelish soldiers were fighting Droaam's gnoll and giant armies at the time, so Breland never even acknowledged the hags' diplomatic effort.

Droaam's current efforts are being viewed more favorably, although ir'Hauptroch was clear to point out that the Karrnathi crown hasn't advanced an opinion on closer relations with Droaam—merely that the recent missives deserve careful consideration. The diplomatic corps in Thrane and Breland are said to remain suspicious of Droaam's overtures.

Actually adding Droaam to the Treaty of Thronehold would require the presence of existing signatories' ambassadors on the island of Thronehold. No such summit has been scheduled, ir'Hauptroch said.

Hannuri d'Tharashk, a dragonshard prospector whose livelihood often takes him to southern Droaam, said there may be another reason for the diplomatic overtures: famine.

"A lot of the population relies on livestock as a food source, but this spring a lot of animals were born weakened and lame," he said. "The gnolls call it urrakhnoon—the purple spots. The animals develop these bruises that make it too painful to stand."

With its livestock herds thus depleted, Droaam may be seeking imports from the breadbaskets of Breland and Aundair, he said.

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Dream Serpent Hides Become Fashion

News for Rhaan 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Dream Serpent Hides Become Fashion for Caravan Dancers

KORRANBERG—Aficionados of the dance known as the caravan have turned to Xen'drik for their newest fashion: capes fashioned from the hides of dream serpents.

The green and silver capes have swept across masquerade balls and formal dances across southern Khorvaire, with some exclusive events barring entry to dancers garbed in mere silk, satin or starweave.

"There's just something about the way the silver flashes during a double-swirl—it makes the entire dance more elegant," said Lahana ir'Yeshri, a noted caravan dancer. "And during the more vigorous parts of the dance, the green scales on the cape take on a luminous quality."

The dream serpent capes first became popular when explorers returning from Xen'drik sold a large quantity of hides to Chandri Thomm, a Korranberg seamstress.

Acquiring more dream serpent hides has proven difficult, however, because the poisonous creatures are exceedingly dangerous and because the drow elves native to Xen'drik regard explorers from Khorvaire as poachers. Existing Thomm-labeled capes have fetched soaring prices as they're passed from noble to noble.

Several Zilargan clothiers plan expeditions to Xen'drik in the coming weeks to capture enough dream serpents to bring back to Khorvaire for breeding.

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Cliffside Lift Operators Warned to Return to Work

News for Rhaan 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Cliffside Lift Operators Warned to Return to Work

SHARN—Grayflood chief stevedore Blau Koonrick warned lift and crane operators in the Cliffside ward to return to their posts immediately in a statement he termed a “final warning.”

“If you don’t get back to work tomorrow, you’ll learn a painful lesson about your own selfishness,” Koonrick said on Sar afternoon. “We will not have Sharn’s sea commerce held captive by agitators who aren’t satisfied with an honest wage for hard work.”

Koonrick’s comments follow a march and demonstration on Far by hundreds of lift and crane operators through the Grayflood and northern Ship’s Towers districts.

The operators are demanding higher wages from their employers. Many of the lift operators are city workers, while the operators of the massive cranes are employed by a cartel of stevedore companies with links to Houses Orien and Lyrandar.

Lower Dura councilor Ilyra Boromar said he’d hear grievances from the lift operators but said returning to work was a necessary precondition for talks. Koonrick struck a more strident tone, saying the stevedore cartels would take “whatever actions are necessary” to get the cranes running again.

“Let’s not kid ourselves: People are going to start going hungry in Sharn because these fools won’t unload ships full of food,” he said. “With their greed and selfishness, the crane operators are going to turn the whole city against them.”

The crane and lift operators vowed another march tomorrow and said lift operators across the city will walk off the job in solidarity.

“What kind of ham-handed threat is this?” said crane operator Breen Wallak. “The city is behind us—we’ve been under the thumb of the profiteers for too long.”

The cheering crowds during Far’s march are proof that “the ordinary working citizen of Sharn stands behind us,” he said.

While Grayflood's cranes have remained still for two days, ships are still being loaded and unloaded in southern Ship's Towers. Most of House Lyrandar's elemental galleons have been docking there for the last month, a shift one Lyrandar captain said was unrelated to the current dispute.

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Invitations Sent for Conqueror Tourney

News for Sypheros 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Invitations Sent for *Conqueror* Tourney

KORTH—Noted *conqueror* aficionado Baron ir'Kantarros has sent out nearly a hundred invitations to players of the board game, inviting them to a first-ever continent-wide tournament.

The tournament, called *Challenge for New Khorvaire*, offers the ultimate victor a land grant in southwest Karrnath. Other top players will earn gold coins, jewelry, and other prizes, ir'Kantarros said.

"After a century of war, there's no better way to usher in a new era than to have the world's finest strategic minds moving pieces on a conqueror board, not armies on a battlefield," he said.

Famous *conqueror* players like Jurra Nellan, Col. Taruth of Cyre, and "Immense" Herrat Mensetain have already indicated their intention to compete, ir'Kantarros said.

"We'll also be inviting some of Khorvaire's acclaimed military leaders," ir'Kantarros said. "And noted minds from other fields as well—the invitation list is as inclusive as possible."

Those invited should receive their invitations within the next two weeks. Included with the invitation is round-trip lightning rail passage to Korth, ir'Kantarros said.

Also competing in the challenge will be ir'Kantarros' nephew, Varro ir'Hatarr. Varro won last year's Karrnath *conqueror* competition, although the final rounds were marred by the unauthorized use of divination magic by some contestants. Tourney rules strictly forbid such assistance, ir'Kantarros said.

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Wizardry Attack on City Hall

News for Sypheros 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Guards Thwart Wizardry Attack on City Hall

SHARN—An attack on Sun Tower on Sar halted debates on tower petitions all afternoon and disrupted city business until the demise of the lone assailant.

The wizard, a middle-aged female human, strode through the tower's West Hall shortly after noon and began summoning various deadly creatures and creating other magic effects.

Nearby Council Guards evacuated City Hall visitors and cordoned off the West Hall.

"We called for assistance from reserves elsewhere in the council hall, and we approached with a fair amount of caution—you can't be too careful with the council at stake," said guard captain Lyshan Aurria. "But it turned out that a lot of the intruder's magic was just cunning illusions."

Aurria said the woman ignored all attempts at communication. When guards moved to arrest her, she attacked with potent fire magic.

The resultant battle left five council guards badly wounded. The assailant attempted to flee to the northwest, then leapt off Opellar's Span, landing on Cursive Street several hundred feet below.

The assailant died on impact with the street. Authorities are attempting to establish her identity.

By sundown council guards had returned to their posts throughout Sun Tower, and normal business resumed.

Speaking on the main steps that evening, Lord Mayor Cathan ir'Demell praised the quick thinking of the council guards on duty in the West Hall.

"We may never know what motivated this crazed magician to attack the foundation of Sharn's government," ir'Demell said. "But we do know that the bravery and grace under pressure demonstrated by our guards today exemplifies what service to Sharn is all about."

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Old Soldiers' Home Massacre

News for Sypheros 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Dozens Slain in Old Soldiers' Home Massacre

MOONWATCH—More than thirty elderly veterans of the Last War are dead following a mysterious attack on the Vermillion Woods Convalescent Home on the southwest Breland coast.

"It was carnage," said facility director Gurya Earlyfell. "They kicked in the front door, split into groups, and just killed everyone they could find," he said. "I was in the Healing Corps during the war, and I never saw such a vicious slaughter."

Vermillion Woods, a manor set on cliffs overlooking the Barren Sea, is home to sixty pensioners, mostly retired Breland Army officers in their seventies or eighties. While the residents may be infirm, their military training served them well, Earlyfell said.

"Many were able to barricade themselves in their rooms or muster a common defense in the dining hall or medical ward," Earlyfell said.

More than a dozen survived by hastily making a false "Quarantine Ward" sign and hanging it over a parlor room. Others used ceremonial weapons granted when they mustered out of the service against their assailants.

With assistance from able-bodied family members visiting Vermillion Woods, Earlyfell said he was able to evacuate almost half of the pensioners. The attackers fled into nearby jungle shortly before sheriffs from the nearby village of Patalien arrived.

The motive for the attack is unclear. Some survivors said the attackers had a sketch of a bearded man that they were comparing residents against.

"They woke me up out of bed and held a parchment up next to my face," said Uldar Harnan, an admiral in Breland's navy until his retirement in 869. "Then they shot me with a crossbow, and I don't remember anything after that."

Courtiers of Duke Tyror ir'Banath said the duke would offer a reward of several thousand gold coins for the capture of those responsible for the Vermillion Woods massacre. Given the number of decorated army veterans among the dead, it's likely that the Brelish crown will also contribute to a reward fund.

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Mysterious Red Box Packages

News for Sypheros 15th, 998

By David Noonan

Mysterious ‘Red Box’ Packages Found Across Sharn

SHARN—At least a dozen small red crates have been delivered to residences and businesses across the city this week, but the boxes’ seemingly random contents have mystified their recipients.

Noted Redstone district seamstress Sheeran Veel reported the first red box last Zol—a box containing fourteen platinum coins and a broken compass. Since then, the boxes have shown up across the breadth and height of the city.

Children playing in a Tumbledown district alley found a red box with four broken-tipped daggers, a city watch sergeant said. The office of Councillor Caskar Halavik received a red box with a live black cat in it. And a Callestan district dream parlor known as Silvermist received a red box with a case of fine Aundairan wine.

Thus far, no one has seen how the boxes are delivered, and they bear no seal, insignia, or other markings. Most are discovered in the early morning—an average of one per day.

The offices of the *Sharn Inquisitive* received a red box last Zol, but it had only blank parchment in it.

A few of the boxes have had grisly contents. One found in Skysedge Park near the statue of General Beneretto contained a severed human hand, and a box received on Far by Morgrave University’s historian and musician-in-residence Allorius Derethe contained a black, foul-smelling substance.

Lt. Illara Drendo of the Sharn Watch’s Blackened Book branch, which investigates magical threats against the city, said anyone coming into contact with a red box should bring it to the Blackened Book headquarters in Warden Towers. Do not open the box, she said.

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Poisoned Cider Intended for Soldiers

News for Aryth 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Thrane Archbishop: Poisoned Cider Intended for Soldiers

THALIOST—Archbishop of Thaliost Solar Dariznu said on Wir that the casks of poisoned cider that killed twelve and sickened more than thirty last week were originally intended for knights at the city's main garrison.

"Cowardly poisoning is crime enough, but to intend such perfidy against knights of the Flame will draw the sternest possible punishment—from both the law and the Silver Flame itself," he said.

Dariznu said inquisitors were working around the clock to apprehend those responsible for the poisoning. He urged anyone with information about cider shipments or "subversive forces" to inform a church inquisitor or knight of Thrane.

Investigators have so far traced the poisoning to a shipment of apple cider that arrived last week by wagon. It was stored in a southern warehouse attached to the Thrane barracks. A supply sergeant noticed the extra casks, marked them surplus, and sold them in the Vintner's Bazaar on Kelwian Street.

"It's clear that the forces of evil wanted to strike at the very heart of Thaliost—those brave knights willing to die for the good-hearted citizens of Thrane," Dariznu said.

Victims of the poisoned cider began falling ill a week ago, complaining of listlessness and headache. Many died in their sleep or linger there, unable to awaken.

As word of the poisonings spread through Thaliost, knights had to restore order following panic at several marketplaces. Several hundred fled the city following rumors that other foodstuffs were likewise tainted, but the next morning the city's gates were closed "to entrap the perpetrators of this vile crime," according to the posted order.

Dariznu said the Church of the Silver Flame was using magic to ensure that the city's food supply was safe—a process that should be complete in two or three days.

In the meantime, no one can enter or leave the city without a writ from the Church. Writs are available at the North Chapel, the Embershrine of Saviors, and the central Cathedral, a church official said.

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Rumored Creation Forge a Hoax

News for Aryth 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Rumored Creation Forge a Hoax

SHARN—Morgrave University Professor Casterran Juliax apologized to fellow scholars and the district of Cogsgate for the chaos that ensued on Far when he led a fact-finding expedition to reveal a working creation forge for warforged—a forge that didn't exist.

Accompanied by several researchers, a detachment of city Watch, and several dozen curious district residents, Juliax entered an abandoned vault along Chimney Street. A reporter from the *Sharn Inquisitive* was among those in attendance.

Shortly after entering the building, the clash of arms rang out. When initial reports from the Watch indicated the presence of warforged in the vault, hope spread like wildfire among the researchers that an intact creation forge had been found. Rumors resounded throughout the district, and a crowd of several hundred gathered, blocking traffic along Chimney Street and the Galluron Bridge.

But a shamefaced Juliax appeared at the doors of the vault about a half-hour later and told the crowd that the vault was empty and the warforged inside were merely squatters. Several warforged were placed under arrest, wanted by the Watch for a variety of petty crimes. The city Watch intervened after an angry confrontation between Juliax and several members of his team, then dispersed the crowd.

Rumors of a creation forge somewhere in the lower districts of Sharn have emerged periodically for years, taking on greater urgency since the end of the Last War.

Merrix d'Cannith, a prominent leader within House Cannith, pointed out that the creation forges were all shut down permanently as part of the Treaty of Thronehold. Cannith remains a strong supporter of the treaty and has shifted its research to other areas, he said.

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Banditry Delays Airship’s Maiden Voyage

News for Aryth 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Banditry Delays Airship’s Maiden Voyage

DRAGONROOST—An attack by marauders from the Howling Peaks will result in a three-week delay for House Lyrandar’s newest high-speed airship, the Power of Purity announced on Zor.

A force of more than three dozen bandits, mostly humans and goblinoids, attacked the Power of Purity’s Swiftwind facility in northwest Zilargo. The bandits were eventually turned away by Purity’s wizards and the elemental creatures that roam the site of their own volition.

But before retreating into the mountains, the bandits were able to set fire to a hangar that contained a nearly complete airship. The as-yet-unnamed airship is the first of a new high-speed design and was destined to be christened by House Lyrandar next month.

Power of Purity founder Harkra Loivaerl Lonadar called on Zilargo to increase patrols in the foothills of the Howling Peaks to end the bandit menace.

“This sort of thing is bad for research, bad for business, and bad for Zilargo,” she said.

The Power of Purity, known for its esoteric approach to elemental binding techniques, is among the most sought-after construction yards for airships.

House Lyrandar has ongoing but sporadic talks with the Power of Purity to become an exclusive supplier to the House, but those talks haven’t come to fruition. It’s unknown what effect the most recent delay would have on those talks.

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Land Grants Delayed for Warforged Veterans

News for Aryth 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Land Grants Delayed for Warforged Veterans

WROAT—Warforged barrister and advocate Hectran petitioned the crown on Zor to begin an official inquiry into "shameful" delays in processing warforged applications for a variety of land-grant programs for military veterans.

"My people served with honor and distinction in some of Breland's most trying times," he said. "But the small-minded prejudice of petty bureaucrats is preventing them from serving the realm with distinction in peacetime as well."

In the petition, Hectran listed more than four hundred warforged veterans whose applications for land grant programs, mostly the Heroes of Breland decree in 996 and the Farm Productivity Act of 997, have been in limbo. Few warforged can even obtain acknowledgement that their applications have been received, he said.

"The Treaty of Thronehold guaranteed full rights for our warforged citizens," Hectran said. "The king should root out those in the government who don't support the Treaty and the rights it promises all of us."

Hectran's petition next goes to the Parliament, where the Select Committee on Warforged Relations will consider it. After advisory votes from both the committee and the full Parliament, it then goes to the throne for action.

Retired General Avask Orakanoll, who advocated strongly for the Heroes of Breland land-grant decree, said that any inquiry into the administration of the land grants will turn up a "viper's nest."

"It's not really an anti-warforged issue—at least not to the degree that Hectran says it is," Orakanoll said. "The land grants aren't happening for anyone—the whole system is corrupt. Local lords are doing everything they can to get their hands on fallow or vacant land themselves."

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Ghost Ship Sighted South of Sharn

News for Vult 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Ghost Ship Sighted South of Sharn

SHARN—A glowing ship moving “arrestingly fast” against the wind was sighted near dawn on Far, traveling without benefit of sail or oars, said reports from two nearby vessels.

The inbound cargo galley *Sarah, Green With Envy* and the Lhazaar fishing vessel *Frostfeather* both reported the ship to the Sharn harbormaster upon landing later that day.

No crew was visible aboard the ship, which passed within “a few hundred feet” of the Lhazaar ship, according to a copy of the ship’s log obtained by the *Sharn Inquisitive*. Present throughout the encounter was a “maddening gurgling and howling, as if the drowned were trying to escape their watery graves.” The glowing ship ran parallel to the Frostfeather for several minutes, then cut across her bow and made for the horizon. Wave action and light fog obscured it about ten minutes later.

The *Sarah, Green With Envy* galley saw the glowing ship at a greater distance, reporting it heading southwest at great speed.

Breland Navy Commandant Janoi ir’Nauphtula said that routine patrols saw no unusual activity yesterday nor so far today. If the ship was neither hostile nor in distress, then it’s likely any outbound vessel wouldn’t report seeing it until it reached its next port. Thus more information may become available in coming days or weeks, she said.

One possibility is that the glowing ship is another sighting of *Lightning on Water*, a House Lyrandar wind galleon reported missing in Rhaan and rumored to hold a great treasure. Reports from sailors last month indicated that the ship may be traveling along Khorvaire’s southern coast with only its bound elemental controlling it.

Untharr Queetan, captain of the *Frostfeather*, was unavailable for comment. Officials of House Lyrandar were unavailable at press time, but they have refused to discuss the *Lightning on Water* incident since the ship’s disappearance this fall.

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Misshapen Giants Emerge From Mournland

News for Vult 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Misshapen Giants Emerge From Mournland, Attack Keep

ARULDUSK—Horribly twisted creatures more than twenty feet tall hurled boulders and wrecked under-construction fortifications at Angwar Keep on Zol, fleeing at dusk back into the Mournland.

More than a dozen creatures were involved in the attack, which left more than twenty Thrane soldiers dead. They appeared to be giants, yet their faces and limbs had what one survivor called a “melted” appearance.

Concerted efforts by the Thrane garrison and a group of warforged veterans known as the Redeemed repulsed the creatures after a pitched battle.

Angwar Keep commander said the garrison has been doubled to guard against further attacks. Patrols north to Olath and south to Aruldusk will be larger and more frequent, he said.

“If there’s one thing my boys have, it’s practice guarding this stretch of coast,” he said. “Whether it’s Cyrans, Karrnathis, or more horrors from the Mournland, we’ll stop it and push it back into the water,” he said.

After the battle, the surviving giants swam back across the northern edge of Lake Arul and were last seen heading toward the ruins of the Cyran city of Eston. The Eston ruins are rumored to hold great wealth from the settlement’s heyday as a mining community, but few who cross the river into the Mournland ever return.

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'Lost 39th' Regiment Emerges From Talorn Reach

News for Zarantyr 8th, 998

By David Noonan

'Lost 39th' Regiment Emerges From Talorn Reach

MOONWATCH—A regiment of Brelish infantry lost since 972 marched into Moonwatch from the southwest, ending a 26-year mystery into their disappearance during a routine troop transfer to a garrison on the southwest coast.

According to numerous eyewitness accounts, the soldiers expressed amazement at the current date. Nor had they noticeably aged during their disappearance of more than two decades.

The regiment will board sea vessels tomorrow for the journey to Sharn. Once there, they'll be questioned about their missing time, then ceremonially mustered out of the crown's service.

"At this point, we believe that the 39th was the victim of some sort of fey enchantment, and we hope to get more details in the next few days," said King's Citadel captain Rollis ir'Ondric, deferring further comment until the 39th Regiment arrives.

Morgrave University arcanist Gillan Luhensia said that episodes of "elastic time" are characteristic of fey magic.

"Both traditional folklore and more academic sources are full of episodes where someone will fall asleep amid a faerie circle and wake up a month or a year later," she said. "But for hundreds of soldiers to simultaneously undergo elastic time represents a watershed for our understanding of the phenomenon."

Folk tales about time slowing down or speeding up are common in southwest Breland, Luhensia said, and many even reference the Talorn region specifically. But thus far, arcanists have been unable to duplicate or observe the phenomenon directly.

"If we can't figure out the conditions under which it occurs, that often means that it's not the place itself that's altering time. It's probably a powerful fey creature or creatures within the Talorn," she said.

Why a creature would trap a regiment within elastic time, then free them unharmed is "a matter for others to speculate on," Luhensia said.

Because many members of the 39th Regiment were recruited from Sharn, a homecoming parade is planned for two weeks time. City officials said a parade time and designated route would be ready in time for next week's *Sharn Inquisitive*.

The Talorn is a known home of many dangers, including flesh-eating satyrs and strange fey tricksters. While it contains thousands of acres of theoretically arable farmlands, past efforts to settle it have fallen victim to strange

mishaps, unusual weather—and perhaps the superstitious fears of the settlers.

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Prince Aejar’s Climbing Expedition to Mount Herrian Overdue

News for Zarantyr 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Prince Aejar’s Climbing Expedition to Mount Herrian Overdue

CRAGWAR—More than two dozen mountain climbers, including Prince Aejar, remain in the Blackcaps tonight, two days after the scheduled conclusion of a journey to the top of Mount Herrian.

Search parties were being organized from among all able-bodied men in Cragwar and surrounding villages, a courtier said on condition of anonymity. Crown representatives were unavailable for comment as the *Sharn Inquisitive* went to press.

Mount Herrian, deep in the Blackcap Mountains, is most famous for the ancient shrines, dating from the latter days of the Dhakanni Empire. It’s regarded as a straightforward climb, requiring little technical proficiency, say local climbers.

Like other mountains in the Blackcap Range, Mount Herrian has no snow on its peak; the surface of the mountain remains warm no matter what the weather. But the path to the mountain is long and winding.

Also among the missing are noted diviner Alliqua Brashen, retired army Colonel Warrick Nathuna, famed explorer Laasha Halli, a squad of King’s Own infantry, and more than a dozen porters and servants.

Aejar, Boranel’s fourth son, is sometimes referred to as “the scarred” due to the claw marks on his face and neck—the result of a childhood mishap with a palace bodyguard animal. He lost an arm in the same incident, but the loss didn’t deter his zest for adventure.

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Sharn Guard Breaks Mysterious Cult; 18 Dead

News for Zarantyr 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Sharn Guard Breaks Mysterious Cult; 18 Dead

SHARN—Four members of the Sharn Guard and fourteen suspected members of a cult are dead after a pitched battle in the Northedge district of Longstairs on Far.

A lead in an ongoing kidnapping investigation led authorities to an apartment tower on Ten Drums Street on Far morning, said watch sergeant Urdren Vannti. Upon entering the tower, the Watch was beset by human and dwarven cultists shouting nonsensical slogans and brandishing spears and daggers.

The Watch briefly retreated until three squads of reinforcements arrived, Vannti said, then reentered the tower and engaged the cultists. The cultists began to display signs of magical taint—purplish, veinal growths on their limbs as they fought. Some cultists immolated themselves and nearby combatants, exploding with a fire from within. “Once these guys started to explode, we got out of the tower in case it caught fire,” Vannti said. “We heard a series of booms—maybe more cultists exploding—then everything was quiet.”

Inside the tower were the badly burned bodies of the cult members. None survived and none attempted to flee the building, Vannti said.

Little is known about the cultists, Vannti said. “We’re searching the apartment tower, and until that’s done, we don’t have much to go on,” he said. “They didn’t identify themselves, at least not in a coherent way. Just a lot of shouting about Xoriat and Thoon, whatever that is.”

Identities of the slain Sharn Guard are withheld pending notification of family. Establishing the identities of the cult members is an ongoing process made difficult by the poor quality of the remains, Vannti said.

The Blackened Book branch of the Sharn Watch will likely lead the ongoing cult investigation starting tomorrow, Vannti said. The Sword Point garrison will retain a lead role in the kidnapping case that uncovered the cult in the first place, he said.

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Freak Windstorm Wreaks Havoc With Scions Sound Shipping

News for Zarantyr 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Freak Windstorm Wreaks Havoc With Scions Sound Shipping

KORTH—A massive windstorm on Zor left eight ships aground on the Karrnathi coast and more than two dozen vessels severely damaged.

The storm, which began shortly after nightfall, also caused extensive damage to light structures in coastal communities on both sides of Scions Sound. Gale-force western winds and high seas pushed most shipping traffic dangerously near the cliffs of Karrnath, although a few vessels were able to find a measure of safety in natural harbors on the Aundairan side of the sound.

Two vessels, the *Gleam in Her Eye* and *Saber's Point*, were abandoned by their crews and suffered heavy damage against the cliffs. More than forty sailors from the *Saber's Point* are missing and believed drowned, and observers say it's unlikely the ships will be salvageable.

A trio of Karrnathi war galleys—the *Indefatigable*, the *Dauntless*, and the *Righteous Retribution*—suffered extensive hull and rigging damage. They remain anchored just east of Rekkenmark, awaiting available docks for repair in Korth.

Karnnathi ambassador Randarr ir'Hothelech said the crown was summoning House Lyrandar leaders to the palace to "get some answers" about the house's ongoing weather control efforts. Due to the presence of the House Lyrandar enclave of Stormhome at the mouth of the Scions Sound, storms of any kind are rare in the stretch of sound between the ocean and Thronehold.

No House Lyrandar vessels were damaged in the windstorm, but Lyrandar wind galleons were instrumental in rescue and recovery efforts in the storm's aftermath.

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Q’barran Settlements Under Siege from Lizardfolk

News for Zarantyr 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Q’barran Settlements Under Siege from Lizardfolk

NEWTHRONE—The town of Whitecliff and surrounding villages are on the verge of being overrun by lizardfolk, said Whitecliff’s mayor in an urgent missive seeking aid from King Sebastes ir’Kesslan.

“We are a proud, hardy people, but make no mistake: We may not survive the month,” said a letter from Mayor Karala Thautram delivered by courier on Zol. “Hundreds, if not thousands, of lizardfolk are encamped among our communities, attacking on a nightly basis.”

Travel in the north has been rendered impossible, Thautram’s letter said. Outlying settlements have been destroyed or evacuated, with all able-bodied soldiers resisting the siege at Whitecliff or in a handful of villages that remain standing.

The lizardfolk belong to the Poison Dusk tribe, known for their diminutive stature and the potent toxins on their weapons, Thautram’s letter said. According to the letter, the tribe often clashes with settlers in the north, but large-scale raids are “unprecedented and puzzlingly uncharacteristic.”

Courtiers speaking on condition of anonymity said King Sebastes would issue a decree of support tomorrow morning and send a column of soldiers northward to break the siege of Whitecliff and force the lizardfolk back into the jungle.

Among the troops marching north will be a contingent of Riedran infantry, sent to Q’barra last year as a goodwill gesture from the Inspired leaders of that nation across the sea.

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Earthquakes near Mror Volcano Raise Eruption Concerns

News for Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Earthquakes near Mror Volcano Raise Eruption Concerns

FROSTMANTLE—Five minor earthquakes over the course of the last week have raised fears that the Fist of Onatar in southern Mror Holds may erupt at any time.

A plume of purple-black smoke has emerged from the top of the mountain, rising straight into the sky. Dwarven communities in the south have started buttressing their underground structures in anticipation of an earthquake or volcanic eruption, said Jallech Bantrell, the *Sharn Inquisitive*'s Mror Holds correspondent.

Merchants and other travelers are heading north away from the mountain, slowing travel on roads through the Mirror Lake valley, Bantrell said. Most of the southern dwarf clans are remaining in their homes, however, he said.

Four of the tremors have been mild and lasting less than two minutes. They could be felt faintly in Frostmantle, more than a hundred miles from the Fist of Onatar. The fifth tremor, which occurred shortly after midnight last Far, was strong enough to knock down wooden surface structures throughout the valley and was felt as far north as Krona Peak.

The Fist of Onatar volcano, one of the largest mountains in the Ironroot Range, is sacred to followers of Onatar. The dwarves of Mroranonhold don't allow visitors to approach closer than a few miles of the mountain, and they frequently apprehend freelance prospectors seeking dragonshards in the caves and lava tubes in the lower reaches of the mountain.

Occasional tremors from the Fist of Onatar are commonplace, but the presence of the plume and the frequency of the quakes suggest that the volcano may be rumbling to life.

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Investigator: Motive Unclear in Slaying

News for Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Investigator: Motive Unclear in Slaying of Councilor's Brother

SHARN—The lead investigator for the Shastroon Boromar murder investigation said on Far that robbery was unlikely the sole motivation for the killers, who remain at large.

"Magically aided reconstruction of the crime scene shows us that it was set afire some time after the murder," said Blackened Book Lieutenant Laruna Thinarr. "More to the point, we believe that the tower wasn't ransacked before the incendiary magic was used. It looks like the arson was a failed attempt to cover up the murder."

Shastroon Boromar, the younger brother of Lower Dura councilor Ilyra Boromar, was found in the burned-out wreckage of a Cornerstone tower two weeks ago. In response to a Council request, an arson and murder investigation was opened up last Zol.

Since then, each day has brought a new, gory detail in the case. Last week, authorities disclosed that Shastroon had been beheaded and the head taken by his assailants. The presence of extensive magical wards around the tower and mysterious cages found in the basement were also unusual for the row of brownstone towers near the Capellar Bridge, less than a dozen blocks from the Cornerstone arena.

Councilor Ilyra Boromar said the City Watch would have "any and all resources" required to bring her brother's killer or killers to justice.

"We Boromars are a quiet, peaceable clan, and Shastroon was the gentlest of us all," she said. "It is my fervent hope that the pain of our mourning will be assuaged by the swift justice brought upon his murderers. They'll never get away with this."

Shastroon Boromar was a arcanist by trade, known for his frequent travels between Sharn and the Talenta Plains, the Boromar clan's ancestral home. He was often accompanied by a four-handed bodyguard called a hadrimoi—a rare creature native to the plains.

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Calls for End to Fortress Moves

News for Olarune 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Aundair Ambassador Calls for End to 'Provocative' Fortress Moves

FAIRHAVEN—Aundair's ambassador to Breland, Landrihl ir'Charbaux, said on Sol he plans to travel to Wroat next week and petition the Brelish crown to end "provocative" maneuvers that put "Breland's floating city-fortresses a stone's throw from Aundair's borders."

"In this time of peace, it's galling that Breland persists in such aggressive posturing on what should be one of the most peaceful borders in all of Khorvaire," ir'Charbaux said. "Such provocative, militaristic displays don't advance the cause of peace. Instead, they're ugly reminders that perhaps we shouldn't trust our neighbors to the south."

The ambassador also plans to address the issue of wine and other luxury goods tariffs assessed by local provinces in northern Breland. Preliminary discussions about a united effort to win the release of "cultural relics" held by Thrane are also on the diplomatic agenda.

But the matter of the floating city-fortress Argonth is expected to generate the most discussion when the Aundairian delegation arrives in Wroat. Argonth, which boasts more than a thousand soldiers, recently completed a journey along the Breland-Aundair border—a route it takes four times a year.

Breland diplomats speaking on condition of anonymity said that Queen Aurala may be trying to take advantage of domestic Breland politics to win Argonth's withdrawal or even decommissioning. Breland Parliament members hailing from eastern Breland have been agitating to have Argonth patrol the border with the Mournland exclusively, responding to frequent monstrous incursions. Argonth currently patrols Breland's western, northern, and eastern borders in a vast circuit.

"It's a sure bet that Aundair is listening to our Parliament, and Queen Aurala is trying to give more ammunition to anyone who wants Argonth somewhere other than right on her doorstep," one diplomat said.

Among Fairhaven's diplomatic corps, ir'Charbaux's reference to "floating city-fortresses," rather than mentioning Argonth by name, launched a round of speculation. Breland's second active city-fortress, Dejarn, is rarely seen and never discussed by either the crown or the Brelish Army. Some diplomats assembled at Fairhaven suggest that ir'Charbaux might obliquely be referring to a sighting of Dejarn, not Argonth, near Aundair.

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Karrn Employed Necromancy

News for Therendor 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Morgrave Sage Says Karrn the Conqueror Employed Necromancy

SHARN—In the final days of his regime, Karrn the Conqueror employed necromantic magic to trap the souls of suspected conspirators against his rule, according to controversial research from Adele Corsinian, a Morgrave University historian specializing in Karrn's era.

A critical reevaluation of period documents suggests that the conspirators executed in the "purge of Shekesaal" in the last year of Karrn's reign remained animate after their execution. The bodies were beheaded before their bodies were burned, and Corsinian contends that the heads were kept alive with necromancy so that Karrn could maintain contact of sorts with the conspirators.

"It's important to consider Karrn's mindset at the time," Corsinian said at a symposium on Wir. "He could see his empire fraying at the edges already, and he'd seen proof that some of his closest advisors—his most trusted inner circle—were conspiring against him. He did what he had to do, but then he secretly kept them alive."

The exact nature of the necromantic magic is lost to time, Corsinian said, but would likely have ensured the conspirators' loyalty as well as restoring a semblance of life.

Conventional histories of the era record the executions of twelve conspirators. "But the executions were beheadings, and they weren't public. That makes the purge of Shekesaal unprecedented in at least two aspects. Why didn't General Shekesaal and his alleged co-conspirators get the gory public executions that every other traitor received?" said Corsinian.

Corsinian further notes that among Karrn's funerary gifts, twelve lacquered boxes are listed. "Amid all these artistic treasures and powerful receptacles of magic, why list twelve boxes? I contend it's because they held the necromantic remains of Shekesaal and the other conspirators, and that Karrn intended to be buried with them."

Few of Karrn's funerary gifts were actually buried with him because relatives descended on his palace shortly after the Conqueror's death, stripping it nearly bare, Corsinian said. The lacquered boxes were undoubtedly taken by one or more of those relatives, then lost in the chaos following the fall of Karrn's empire, he said.

Corsinian's declarations at the symposium did not go uncontested. Ghaul ir'Jurchek, master historian at Korth's Shrine of the Conqueror, said the necromantic survival of the Shekesaal conspirators was "a fairy tale that isn't true just because it isn't directly contradicted by anything in the historical record."

While Karrn the Conquerer employed talented magicians of all sorts and had no particular dislike for necromancy, that doesn't mean he kept the heads of condemned criminals alive after death, ir'Jurchek said.

A more interesting historical question, ir'Jurchek said, is whether all twelve of the conspirators were guilty of treason. Many believe that General Shekesaal's interest in continuity of rule was tragically misinterpreted by court gossips, ir'Jurchek said. Two of the executed warlords, Kau and Hujiri, were far from the capital at the time and evinced no interest in court politics. And trial records shed little light on what role Yahina the concubine and Vlohr the alchemist played in the conspiracy, if any.

"Historians like myself and Corsinian have been going back and forth over the purge of Shekesaal for centuries, and we'll still be arguing in centuries to come," ir'Jurchek said. "As much as I'd like to ask Shekesaal's animated head whether he was really guilty or not, real-world history doesn't work that way."

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Lhazaar Investment Pacts Announced

News for Therendor 8th, 998

By David Noonan

House Tharashk Announces Lhazaar Investment Pacts

ZARASH'AK—House Tharashk announced on Zol an ambitious set of dragonshard prospecting ventures in the Lhazaar Principalities, a northeastern confederacy of sea barons and merchant princes.

"Tharashk's knack for dragonshard extraction is known across Khorvaire," said triumvir Khundar'aashta from the House compound in the Shadow Marches. "And we have every confidence that, in conjunction with our local partners in Regalport and beyond, our efforts in the Principalities will be just as profitable."

Members of the Finder's Guild from the House Tharashk's Aashta family will direct the new ventures, Khundar'aashta said. House prospectors are already working with Prince Ryger ir'Wynarn's Seadragons for transport to several remote islands in the Lhazaar archipelago. Other sea barons are being offered similar transport deals in exchange for a percentage of profits from dragonshard prospecting.

House Tharashk's announcement caught many house watchers by surprise, because the Lhazaar Principalities have never been considered a lucrative source for dragonshards. But some Lhazaar princes said they'd seen evidence of dragonshard wealth with their own eyes.

"The Tharashk prospector came back with a chest full of dragonshards the size of my fingers—after only two weeks searching an island in my realm," said Prince Kaelisk, commander of a Lhazaar fleet anchored at Stonespur Island. "The terms could be better, of course, but anyone in the merchant business says that. Suffice it to say that our agreement should be lucrative for both House Tharashk and for all under the protection of my Coldtide Fleet," he said.

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Breland Apologizes for Arrest

News for Therendor 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Breland Apologizes for Arrest of Orien Scion

VATHIROND, BRELAND—General Jorekk Blandra, commander of the King's Own 4th Border Army, apologized on Sar for the day-long detention of a high-ranking member of House Orien traveling to Sharn on House business.

"In our zeal to protect the borders of this fair nation from interlopers and criminals, we misinterpreted some sensitive intelligence," he said in a written statement issued from the army's keep northwest of the city. "Our sincerest apologies go out to Jarla d'Orien and members of her entourage for the delay."

Jarla d'Orien oversees the house's caravan operations throughout western Khorvaire. Her detention in Vathirond last week brought a swift response from House Orien, which briefly suspended lightning rail service to Breland destinations in response to the arrest. She was freed last Zor.

General Blandra's statement did not mention the specific charges that resulted in d'Orien's arrest, nor the nature of the intelligence that his staff misinterpreted. Staff officers of the King's Own 4th said the general was traveling back to Wroat and unavailable for further comment.

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Thrane Decorates Bridge of Stars

News for Sul 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Thrane Decorates ‘Bridge of Stars’ for Anniversary Festival

SIGILSTAR, THRANE—City officials said on Sar that preparations are nearly complete for a major festival to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Bridge of Stars.

Lord Mayor Lahira ir’Vanaisho stated that a Thrane Army parade would march across the bridge at noon, to be followed by religious services in the Temple of the Silver Flame and a circus on the hills southwest of the bridge. Dignitaries from nearby communities have been invited to attend, as have bishops and priests from Flamekeep.

The Bridge of Stars has long been a source of pride for Thranes for two reasons. First, it’s a replacement for an earlier bridge destroyed by Breland in the 940s. Second, Thranes take great pride in their ability to construct such an architectural wonder despite the rigors of war; the bridge took nearly 18 years to complete, with work halted several times during wartime.

The bridge is wide enough for eight wagons to travel abreast, and is more than 10 feet taller at midspan than the original bridge it replaced, enabling larger barges to reach towns upriver from Sigilstar.

But what draws attention is the surface of the bridge itself, rendered magically transparent so that travelers can gaze downward into the Thrane River. Also noteworthy are clusters of magical flames on the superstructure, arranged into familiar constellations, which give the bridge its name.

The transparency of the bridge can be somewhat frightening to newcomers.

“At first, you don’t think there’s anything there,” said Harlech Brandaol, a visitor from the Mror Holds. “When you take that first step, you think you’ll plummet right into the river for a swim. But it feels sturdy under your feet, and that’s what you really want in a bridge.”

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Hundreds in Karrnathi Land Rush

News for Sul 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Hundreds Head East in Karrnathi Land Rush

VULYAR, KARRNATH—Roads and inns throughout southeast Karrnath have been far busier than usual, bolstered by hundreds seeking the chance next week to gain free title to land southwest of Irontown and Fort Deepdark.

Hundreds are expected to claim parcels of the former estates of the ir'Hauptrach, ir'Jennrei, and southern ir'Orall families. Ownership of the estates reverted to the crown after the last heirs of those families perished during the Last War.

Because the land is only marginally arable and has no strategic significance, Karrnath is eager to return it to private ownership—and the tax rolls.

While such organized homesteading efforts are commonplace in Aundair and Breland, the division of these three estates marks the first time King Kaius III has consented to such a redistribution.

Would-be landed gentry have come from as far as southern Breland, the Shadow Marches, and the Lhazaar Principalities to have a chance at more than 100 parcels of land. Other than a good-faith deposit that depends on the size of the parcel, the land is free for the taking—with a proviso that the new owners till the land or build a defensible structure within two years of taking ownership.

In the likely event that there are more applicants than parcels of land, the crown has empowered Brandin ir'Dulinch, commander of Fort Deepdark, to assess the fitness of applicants to manage the land and to conduct a lottery for the parcels.

Former citizens of Cyre and elves with demonstrable connections to Valenar are ineligible to participate, according to the terms of the decree. Other foreigners are eligible so long as they renounce citizenship elsewhere and swear fealty to the Karrnathi crown.

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Last Exchequer Conspirator to be Hanged

News for Sul 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Last of ‘Exchequer Conspirators’ to be Hanged Tomorrow

SHARN—Disgraced scribe Anastro Lavatri, convicted last year of treason in the wake of the “Exchequer Scandal,” will be hanged tomorrow in front of Andith Tower in the Ambassador Towers district.

Lavatri’s barrister, Bandaran Urnash, said last week that he’d exhausted his legal appeals, and that the writ of commutation which would have spared his life has languished in the Breland Parliament.

Lavatri’s execution will bring to a close an embarrassing scandal at the vaunted King’s Citadel. Three staff officers and two scribes, including Lavatri, were convicted last Olarune of embezzling funds for the city’s defense, and building themselves opulent towers on the Upper Central plateau.

The conspiracy was uncovered only after a routine crown audit noticed some discrepancies in the Citadel’s books. At trial, some witnesses expressed doubt as to whether Lavatri realized the ledger entries he made were fraudulent.

Although she wasn’t implicated in wrongdoing, the scandal led Knight-Marshal Chanarri Yewn to resign her commission. Her crown-appointed replacement, Knight-Marshal Banarak Tithon, holds the post to this day. He is expected to oversee Lavatri’s execution.

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Relief Convoy Attacked in Aundair

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Relief Convoy Attacked in Western Aundair

WYR, AUNDAIR—A convoy carrying food and healers to the village of Salanoux was destroyed less than a mile from its destination last week, caught in the crossfire of border clashes across Aundair's northwest border.

Representatives of the Aundairian army and guerilla forces known as the Eldeen Wolves blamed each other for the attack on the twelve-wagon caravan. No survivors had been found as of last Wir, nor eyewitnesses to the attack.

The convoy, organized by Lord Egan ir'Ransaldrie in response to pleas for assistance, did have a contingent of guards but was flying a blue flag—often used in western Khorvaire to indicate noncombatant status.

Lord ir'Ransaldrie said he was heartbroken at the loss.

"My family has its roots in Salanoux, and when I heard that their granary had been looted a few weeks ago, I had to act," he said. "Many good Ransaldries died on that road, and I want to know who's responsible."

Colonel Borchard of the nearby Otharaunt fortress said that the Aundairian army would be securing Salanoux and surrounding homesteads within the next two days, and would arrange a relief effort if starvation or illness was pervasive.

"I can assure the Lord that my troops would never attack a relief caravan, even if we weren't informed about it ahead of time. That's the sort of thing the Wolves do, not us."

A missive from Rhunadask, leader of the Eldeen Wolves, posted throughout Wyr on Zol, also denied responsibility for the attack, calling it "further evidence that Aundair will stop at nothing to keep the Eastern Reaches under the heel of the jackboot. Only a tyrant would starve her own citizens, then blame others for her perfidy."

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General’s Family: The End is Near

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan

General’s Family: The End is Near

STARILASKUR, BRELAND—A fall from a horse has badly injured Hallorek the Black, last of Cyre’s Sorcerer-Generals. A younger cousin has told the *Sharn Inquisitive* on Far that family members are gathering at his bedside in New Cyre because “the end is near.”

Hallorek, 92, was known for personally augmenting the siege engines under his command with powerful magic during Cyre’s incursions into Karrnath in the 960s. He was stationed only a few miles beyond the devastation on the Day of Mourning and eloquently described the firestorms in the letter that resigned his commission. The letter was reprinted in handbill form and widely disseminated throughout Cyran refugee camps.

After the war’s end, Hallorek was a common sight in those refugee camps, using magic to construct shelters and otherwise ease the plight of what he once called, “my countrymen, bound forever by memory and tears.”

Healers from the nearby temple to the Sovereign Host have been summoned to Hallorek’s bedside, but his advanced age prevents healing magic from functioning.

Chenni Nilsanza, a cousin of Hallorek’s, said that the general sleeps most of the day but is lucid when awake. She said that upon regaining consciousness after the fall, he expressed surprise to still be alive and noted the irony of dying in an equestrian accident.

During the Last War, Hallorek eschewed an officer’s steed, instead electing to use his magic to fly from place to place. An expert in both the offensive and defensive aspects of siege warfare, he once said that cavalry was “no damn good in a siege, unless it lasts long enough that you have to eat the horses.”

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Crowds Expected for Morgrave Graduation

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Crowds Expected for Morgrave Graduation

SHARN—Next Zur is graduation day for many of Morgrave University's students, bringing thousands of well-wishers to the University District and throughout Upper Menthis Plateau.

City Watch Commander Silaena Cazal said extra patrols would be deployed to manage the teeming crowds throughout the weekend, but that residents should expect to be rubbing shoulders with visitors.

"I'll note that Sharn has several laws on the books to punish overly festive carousing, and I intend to enforce them," Cazal said. "And the Watch will be particularly vigilant about petty street crime. We're not going to have a repeat of last year's disorder."

University District residents reported widespread pickpocketing, confidence games, and assaults during graduation week last year.

Most of the traditional academic colleges honor their graduates in a common ceremony in the Great Hall of Aureon at noon. This year's keynote speaker is Daerin Ollio, noted for his exploration of the mysterious dragon continent of Argonessen.

A few colleges run on different schedules. The arcanist and theological colleges, for example, awards degrees to their graduates in Nymm.

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Brideveil Waterfall Reverses Course

News for Nymm 8th, 998

By David Noonan

Brideveil Waterfall Reverses Course

MOONWATCH, BRELAND—The mysterious magical phenomena afflicting western Breland have reappeared in dramatic fashion, as the Brideveil Waterfall started flowing upward on Wir.

The rest of the Sorrihla river continues to flow in its usual direction, with only the water within a half-mile of the waterfall heading upstream. Local observers said the water itself appears normal, and some enterprising anglers have even caught some trout from the pools below the waterfall.

The scenic waterfall at the headwaters of the Sorrihla has religious significance for local druids, who have seasonal ceremonies there. But druid leader Skytalon said that she's as baffled as anyone else by the reversed waterfall.

"I urge patience and calm," she said. "Surely the meaning of the current strangeness will reveal itself in time. The natural world often reveals its secrets like a rose unfurling its petals."

The waterfall's reversal has no overt connection to other strange phenomena in western Breland this spring, including:

- Clouds forming strange sigils in the sky over Ardev in Eyre.
- Every apple grown within two days' travel of Ringbriar tasting normal but developing bright blue skin.
- Deer and elk dropping their antlers—normal in autumn but unheard of in spring.
- The utter disappearance of the Chaarkia Woods south of Ardev.
- Unusually high tides along Breland's southwest coast.

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Sudden Retirements Leave Phiarlan Musicians in Demand

News for Lharvion 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Sudden Retirements Leave Phiarlan Musicians in Demand

FLAMEKEEP—A number of key retirements within House Phiarlan's Demesne of Music has left nobles bidding against each other for top-notch musicians for this summer's weddings, festivals, and other ceremonies.

Announcing their retirement from regular performances are Rannelli Allarus d'Phiarlan, Tyrick "the Sparrow" d'Phiarlan, Chann-soon d'Phiarlan, and Phiarlan-affiliated Korthos the Mad Drummer. And just last week, the "Mountain Shadow" quartet surprised a packed ampitheater in Sharn with an announcement that they were performing their final show as a quartet.

Instrumental musicians such as the Flamekeep Trio, the lutist Rhone Triann d'Phiarlan, and flutist Yanthri d'Phiarlan have also said they'll be unavailable this summer, citing a demanding composition workload or illness.

Kels Tallaen d'Phiarlan, Lord Seneschal of Thrane and Viceroy of House Phiarlan's Demesne of Music, said that while many familiar names will be unavailable this summer, the House has many musicians of "peerless talent and ability."

"The House is more than its brightest stars, and we take our presence in important ceremonies very seriously," Tallaen d'Phiarlan said. "The names may be less familiar this summer, but the beauty of a Phiarlan song never changes."

Some of the high-profile retirements are surprising because the musicians are relatively young. Chann-Soon d'Phiarlan, for example, appears to be in her mid-thirties—although her "river quaver" singing style is notoriously exhausting.

And the fact that Ranneli Allarus, Tyrick, Rhone Triann, and the Mountain Shadow quartet all performed "Ballad of the Twin Pines" in their final performances led some music patrons to wonder whether strife within House Phiarlan led to the wave of retirements. The ballad tells the story of two young lovers who run off together because they're stifled by strict families.

Tallaen d'Phiarlan said such speculation is "imaginative, but utterly baseless."

"Anyone within the House, if they're being honest, would admit that there's a certain level of tension whenever you gather so many creative, talented people together. But there's no greater reason behind the retirements—just a confluence of separate events," he said.

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Clan Soldorak Announces ‘Khorvaire’s Deepest’ Mine in Goradra Gap

News for Barrakas 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Clan Soldorak Announces ‘Khorvaire’s Deepest’ Mine in Goradra Gap

KRONA PEAK—Bruun Soldorak said on Sar that ore extraction will begin this month at the clan’s Glitterdeep mine in Goradra Gap. With two main shafts extending two miles below the surface, the clan claims that Glitterdeep will be the deepest known mine.

“Within a few short weeks, we’ll start a new chapter in the glorious history of Clan Soldorak,” Bruun said. “We plan to share our new prosperity with our neighbors both beyond the clan, bringing them metal ore in both quality and quantity undreamed of.”

The clan has been excavating the main shaft and more than 200 miles of tunnels for more than a decade. Bruun Soldorak’s father, Gerrim Soldorak, did much of the initial prospecting and mine architecture shortly before his death in 987.

Excavation of the mine stopped for eight months last year after an incursion of strange monsters in the tunnels forced the clan to mobilize for war. Clan Soldorak rebuffed offers of assistance from other clans, and to this date no one outside the clan has seen anything other than one of the main shafts.

The very existence of the mine is controversial in the Mror Holds. The deep canyons of Goradra Gap are known to be home to strange, hostile monsters that periodically emerge from deep underground, and dwarves outside Clan Soldorak worry that the Glitterdeep will give such beasts easier access to the surface world.

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Smoke from Wildfires Darkens Skies Over Vedykar

News for Barrakas 22nd, 998

By David Noonan

Smoke from Wildfires Darkens Skies Over Vedykar

VEDYKAR, KARRNATH—Wildfires across southeast Karrnath and the Talenta Plains has laid a thick pall of smoke across Vedykar.

The smoke has limited visibility to less than 50 feet, even at noon. The smoke appeared on the southern horizon on Zol and descended over the city the next day.

The Karrnathi Army units at Hundrach Barracks have been deployed to the city streets as a precautionary measure. The elderly and the young are advised to remain indoors, said town criers from the lord mayor's office yesterday.

Wildfires on the grassy plains are common in the height of summer, but the first seem to be more frequent and spreading further north this year.

Druids affiliated with the halfling clans of the Talenta Plains are said to be using weather magic to battle the blazes. But some Karrnathis wonder whether the druids are entirely altruistic.

"Every year we hear about how the druids are going to conjure up rainstorms to stop the fires," said Ulvey ir'Prachtaal, a count with extensive holdings east of Vedykar. "Yet I notice that it's strong winds from the southeast that are pushing the smoke—and eventually the fires—our way. If you can conjure up rainstorms, I'll bet you can conjure up a southeast wind, too."

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